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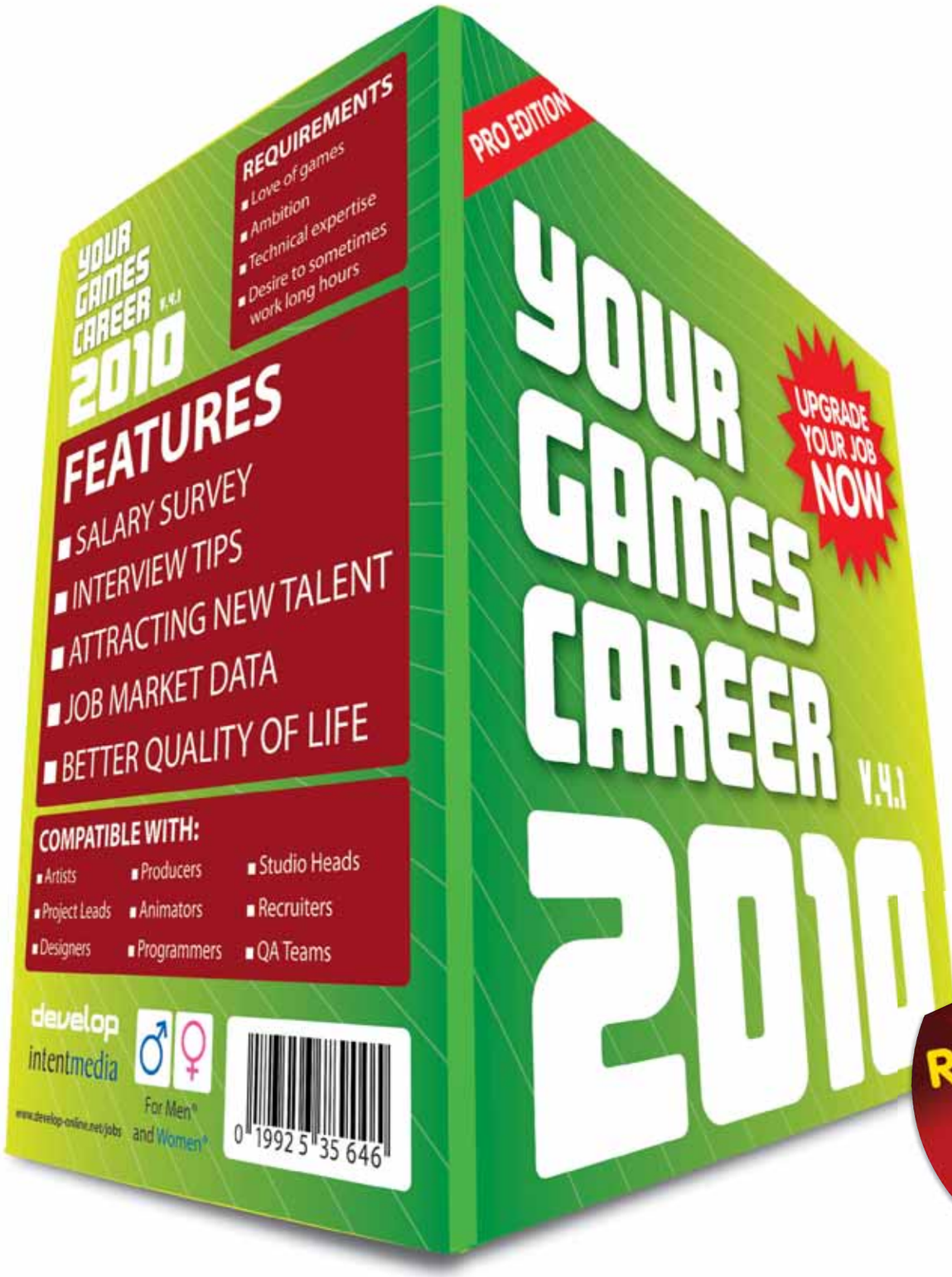

RECRUITMENT SPECIAL

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develop
THE INTERNATIONAL MONTHLY FOR GAMES PROGRAMMERS, ARTISTS, MUSICIANS AND PRODUCERS

Editor-in-Chief
Michael French
michael.french@intentmedia.co.uk

Deputy Editor
Ed Fear
ed.fear@intentmedia.co.uk

Staff Writer
Will Freeman
will.freeman@intentmedia.co.uk

Online Editor
Rob Crossley
rob.crossley@intentmedia.co.uk

Advertising Manager
Katie Rawlings
katie.rawlings@intentmedia.co.uk

Production Manager
Suzanne Powles
suzanne.powles@intentmedia.co.uk

Designer
Dan Bennett
dan.bennett@intentmedia.co.uk

Sub-Editor
Gemma Messina
gemma.messina@intentmedia.co.uk

Publisher
Stuart Dinsey
stuart.dinsey@intentmedia.co.uk

Managing Editor
Lisa Foster
lisa.foster@intentmedia.co.uk

Executive Editor
Owain Bennallack
owain.bennallack@intentmedia.co.uk

Contributors
Ben Board, David Braben, John Broomhall, Rick Gibson, Thomas Grove, Elaine Russell, Billy Thomson, Trevor Williams

Cover Photography
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

intentmedia
Intent Media is a member of the Periodical Publishers Associations

Develop Magazine. Saxon House, 6a St. Andrew Street. Hertford, Hertfordshire. SG14 1JA
ISSN: 1365-7240 Copyright 2009 Printed by The Manson Group, AL3 6PZ

Tel: 01992 535646 **Fax:** 01992 535648
www.develop-online.net

CIRCULATION IS OVER 8,000

Subscription

UK: £35 Europe: £50 Rest of World: £70

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ALPHA
ADVENTURES IN GAMES DEVELOPMENT: NEWS, VIEWS & MORE

"There might as well have been a lava level in Modern Warfare 2 for all the story mattered to me…"
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Has eye candy in games lost its lustre?
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BBC to fund new games

UK broadcaster eyes up iPhone and online game projects ● Key IPs available for smart firms to turn into Wii/DS titles

by Michael French

UK BROADCASTER the BBC will start funding new iPhone and online games projects as it resuscitates its interactive plans.

Five years after killing off its BBC Multimedia division, the entertainment firm responsible for the likes of *Doctor Who*, *Torchwood*, *Top Gear* and a host of children's brands wants to try its hand at video games again.

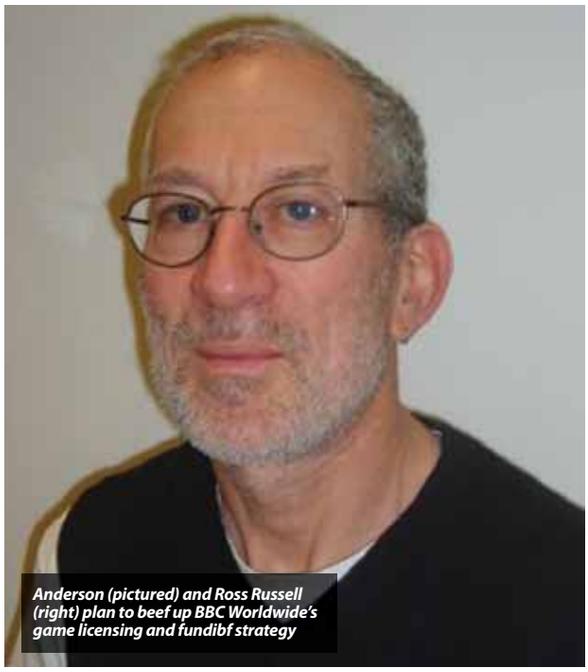
This time, instead of focusing on boxed product, the team at commercial arm BBC Worldwide plan to push mainstream IPs towards publishers working on Wii and DS, while funding a number of app and online games projects spun off of its popular TV shows itself.

BBC Worlwide's head of multimedia development Dave Anderson told *Develop* that the rapid changes online gaming and distribution have brought about have tempted the broadcaster back into interactive content.

What he calls a 'renaissance of opportunity' has meant anyone looking to get into games can do so quicker than ever – something the BBC wants to take advantage of.

"I still have nightmares about starting development on a project and then by the time it hit retail it was no longer on TV," he said.

"This is about speed to market and better economics – because you have lower costs you can build UK-specific opportunities and commercial relationships with distributors, plus we can be the publisher."



Anderson (pictured) and Ross Russell (right) plan to beef up BBC Worldwide's game licensing and fundibf strategy

Some projects around key IPs have already been set up, with Anderson adding that multiple games could be built to serve the audiences for properties like *Doctor Who* and other shows.

"That means the opportunity to work on a case by case basis – if a creative company comes up with a great idea for our properties in the interactive space, we will look at it in terms of direct licensing but also see how we can establish a different relationship," he said. "A great example is down at the lower end of the food chain. There's a good fit between our brands and that huge appetite out there for mobile apps. They're good for revenue generation and marketing extension – those efforts will be mostly funded in-house."

As time goes on, the team at BBC Worldwide said, the chances are the games projects they commission and licence out will overlap and work with their otherwise static TV properties.

Said Anderson: "BBC Worldwide is increasingly in the online space so there are real opportunities to see how we marry content and interactive together."

> ***"There's a good fit between our brands and the huge appetite out there for mobile apps. These efforts will be mostly funded in-house."***
>
> Dave Anderson, BBC Worldwide

BBC Worldwide children's and licensing boss Neil Ross Russell aded: "We're a content business; that's what the BBC is. But content is no longer simply pushed out by a broadcaster – interactive content is just as valid as TV. Our legacy is to just keep commissioning content. There are a number of our brands where we would much rather have creative control – so that the app or game is clearly still 'BBC content.'"

Read the full interview on the BBC's game plan at www.develop-online.net

Editorial

Hidden talents

A FEW YEARS ago when it came to writing these editorials talk often covered the talent crunch.

With team sizes and budgets growing, and headhunters more active than ever, it was nigh on impossible to find a studio head, HR rep or recruiter happy with the amount of new faces they were attracting.

One recession later, has much changed? Our chat with those at the coal face of this problem (*p23*) suggests that there is still a swathe of open coding vacancies and not enough decent recruits to fill them.

The key word seems to be decent. The increasing sophistication of games development as a career field means more pressure than ever is being placed on finding the right somebody – not just anybody. (When it recently came to recruiting a new journalist I experienced this first-hand, although don't think for one second I'm kidding myself into believing the hunt was as hard-going as studios sometimes find it.)

Studios don't just want a good artist or a decent coder - they want a happy medium. Technical artists, audio coders, designers with production experience – the list goes on. But rather than being problematic, this is inspiring; and the increasing desire for staff with varied skillsets satisfies both games development's heritage and its future.

The hunt for specialists harks back to the 'all rounder' mentality that pervaded back when the studios, games, installed bases and risks were smaller.

Meanwhile, platforms like iPhone and engines like Unity are helping talented folk bubble up to the surface. In an ironic twist, the very forces that are disrupting the fringes of the traditional industry are priming the future workforce for a role at its core.

So while the rogue coders to the right might not want to go back to working for big studios, that doesn't mean other indies want to remain on the edges. Perhaps there is a place for them to prove themselves in games development's heartland in the years to come.

Michael French
michael.french@intentmedia.co.uk

Rise of the

Big studios shed key staff, but not out of choice – the Apple goldrush

by Michael French

EVERYONE IN games development has an opinion on the power of iPhone. And every one is right.

18 months after it blossomed into a games platform, iPhone's app marketplace is packed with ideas and has provided an outlet to games talent out of the industry's remit – but it is also crowded to the point of saturation, and boasts as many awful games as there are good ones.

But a bunch of UK developers are asking: who cares? Instead, they are seeing iPhone as a way out of the hundred-man software house treadmill to micro-studios where they can be their own boss and explore their own ideas.

Take Hayden Scott-Baron. Formerly of Frontier Developments, Scott-Baron is an artist by training but used Unity to flesh out his coding skills and give him the confidence to risk it outside of one of the UK's distinguished and secure independents.

According to him, iPhone has given micro-studios not just a chance to exist, but to turn the tables on the goliaths of games development.

"The iPhone has shown me that any game can stand a chance when placed against larger publishers such as EA, especially in an environment where independent games can get just as much attention," he told *Develop*.

At the time of writing, his first game *Tumbledrop* is listed as one of the Hot New Games on the US App Store alongside the new iPhone version of *GTA: Chinatown Wars* (which, incidentally, is also UK-made).

"You would never see that in a retail environment, and it's difficult even on PC for anyone other than enthusiasts to pay any attention to a small game made by a very small team."

Tumbledrop is eye-catching – it shows off Scott-Baron's art skills as well as his puzzle design nous. It's this simpler, clearer but stylised take that helps solo developers stand out on the iPhone, he believes.

> ***"iPhone has shown that any game has a chance when up against larger publishers, especially in an environment where indies get as much attention."***
>
> Hayden Scott-Baron

"It's also made me think more about how games need to be appropriate for the platform. I've seen a lot of developers jump in to create very large or very complex games on the iPhone that I'm not certain are necessarily appropriate for the interface," he warned.

But he predicts that iPhone will draw in even more unique independents with their own distinct visual style: "There's certainly a strong spirit of 'give it a go' amongst developers now, knowing that there is a potential outlet without any worry of development kits or red tape. It's also given developers a reason to try out their project ideas, rather than letting them squander in a notepad. There's definitely a rise in alternative art styles too, be they childish 'sketch' type drawings, or incredibly abstract graphics, or simply very bold visuals – it pays off to make something noticeable."

It's already happening of course – iPhone games that have been either championed widely or remain perhaps under the radar come from the minds of single developers working

iPhone auteurs

is inspiring a new wave of UK indies to leave larger software houses and go it alone

alone or with select partners. *Rolando* (by Simon Oliver), *Flock Control* (by Mark Tully), and *Cube Runner* (by Andy Qua) are just three examples (and *Develop* favourites).

But it's not just the middle-tier talent that otherwise would have unnoticed which is running for the iTunes spotlight – the bug has bitten one of UK development's high profile game directors.

Fable 2 creative director Dene Carter quietly left Lionhead last year to form his own studio, Fluttermind, and released his first iPhone game, *Flaboo!*, in mid-December.

Like *Tumbledrop*, *Rolando*, *Flock Control* and *Cube Runner* it's a quick, quirky and cheap but compelling idea that wouldn't exist if the host platform hadn't made its disruptive debut in 2007.

"The iPhone's hardware was fairly unique at the time," he reminded *Develop* when looking back at his gradual move away from triple-A titles. "Its screen in particular was absolutely fantastic, and this was a major factor in the platform's appeal. *Flaboo!* wouldn't have looked anywhere near as polished on any other device at the time when I began development. Also, the accelerometer and touch-screen were begging to be used in novel ways. In *Flaboo!* I've done odd things like ask you to shake the device in order to remove slime off yourself, and tap the screen to pop bubbles that get in your way. It doesn't sound world-shattering, but consider for a moment that you can't do that kind of tactile thing on a console; even the Wii is too cumbersome to make the action natural."

And it's still not exactly natural for well-paid talents like Carter to shrug off a role in a high-profile Microsoft-owned studio to indulge pet projects, either.

"From a career-building point of view, it obviously looks like a massive step backward," he said.

"The traditional view would be that I now have an ever-increasing blot on my CV representing a period where my team's size is precisely one. My family's income has also, of course, halved. But when you become frustrated by something, some segment of the industry, you can either complain and remain sat where you are, or try and do something about it."

Carter's not convinced the trend will lead to an exodus of staff from UK studios, however – and doesn't forsee an army of iPhone indies in the UK.

"For an exodus to occur, you'd have to find a lot of people who value self-expression far more than a regular salary. There's no judgement in that statement: this industry is getting older, a lot of people in it now have families. Most can't afford the luxury of that choice. At this point in my life, I just needed something different to retain my sanity."

■ *For more insight from Carter and Scott-Baron about the ups and downs of going it alone, check out our full-length Q&As with them at www.develop-online.net/features/*

Former Frontier man Hayden Scott-Baron (above) and Lionhead's Dene Carter (below) have both broken away to form micro-studios serving iPhone

Left, from top to bottom: three games made by other UK iPhone auteurs –Rolando (Simon Oliver), Cube Runner (Andy Qua) and Flock Control (Mark Tully)

Gamer Camp 2009

Midlands trade bodies' development workshop hailed a success…

A free four-week course, supported by the development industry, that helps wannabe game makers get a project published on the App Store sounds too good to be true – but it's exactly what Screen WM and Advantage West Midlands provided last year with Gamer Camp.

An intensive four-week programme held at Birmingham City University in November and December last year, the initiative began with a week of professional training in game programming and interface design led by Guy Wilday, previously of Codemasters and the man behind the *Colin McRae Rally* series.

This was followed by three weeks of mentoring as the students worked together to meet the challenge set by the course directors – to develop and produce a game for the iPhone.

In line with the challenge, areas covered by the course included game design principles for mobile devices, tuition in the iPhone software development kit and optimisation techniques, as well as specific elements tailored to coders and games artists. Prior to the course's conclusion, students were then required to present their efforts to representatives from Microsoft, Codemasters and Activision.

In addition, there were also three evening masterclasses open to people outside of the course, including a Q&A session with Philip Oliver from Blitz Games.

We caught up with course attendee Steve Parkes, who told us that he hoped the experience would lead to a career in the gaming industry. "At job interviews I'm usually asked to present a game I have developed, but having completed Gamer Camp I can also show them a game that has already been published," he said. "I can hold my head high knowing that people are already using a game I helped to create."

Adam Tong works as a junior games developer at Birmingham-based Rice Media, and was sent along to use the course for additional training. As well as getting access to top industry experts, he enjoyed working with the other students: "Having just entered the industry I've only worked on personal projects by myself, so being part of a group has helped me develop my teamwork skills very quickly."

Gamer Camp was run by two organisations, BCU and Screen WM, and supported by Advantage West Midlands, Game Central and industry partners including Blitz Games.

Gamer Camp hopes to cement its students' passion for a career in the games industry

Oliver Williams, director of BCU's Screen Media Lab, told us that he hoped the experience would cement the attendees' desire to work within the games industry.

"I am really proud of the Gamer Camp attendees," he said. "Four weeks ago none of them were able to realise their ideas into an actual published game.

"After a month at BCU, they have completed the course with a published game, new skills, and confidence."

tinyurl.com/gamercamp

DEVELOP DIARY

YOUR COMPLETE GAMES DEVELOPMENT EVENT CALENDAR FOR THE MONTHS AHEAD…

THE DEVELOP QUIZ
March 4th
Sway Bar, London, UK
www.develop-online.net/events

The latest outing for this essential networking event will put 20 teams of five against each other.

As well as the ambitious Premier PR games team, headed up by Simon Byron and Ali Wood, competitors include Dolby Laboratories, Waterfront, Just Add Water, Exient, Peppermint P, Hotgen, Firefly, Curve, 3 Monkeys, Big Head Games, Bad Management and Aardvark Swift.

Studios, publishers, QA, recruitment and localisation companies are all invited to attend.

To book your place at contact kathryn.humphrey@intentmedia.co.uk, and to learn more about various sponsorship opportunities, email katie.rawlings@intentmedia.co.uk.

FEBRUARY 2010

CASUAL CONNECT EUROPE
Februray 10th to 12th
Hamburg, Germany
europe.casualconnect.org

DICE SUMMIT 2010
February 17th to 19th
Las Vegas, US
www.dicesummit.org

MICROSOFT GAMEFEST 2010
February 24th to 25th
London, UK
www.microsoftgamefest.com

MARCH 2010

THE DEVELOP QUIZ
March 4th
London, UK
www.develop-online.net/events

GDC 2010
March 9th to 13th
San Francisco, US
www.gdconf.com

AI SUMMIT
March 9th to 10th
San Francisco, US
www.gdconf.com/conference

APRIL 2010

NORDIC GAME 2010
April 27th to 29th
Malmö, Sweden
www.nordicgame.com

MAY 2010

GDC CANADA 2010
May 6th to 7th
Vancouver, Canada
www.gdc-canada.com

JUNE 2010

FESTIVAL OF GAMES
June 4th to 5th
Utrecht, Holland
www.festivalofgames.nl/site

E3 2010
June 15th to 17th
Los Angeles, US
www.e3expo.com

JULY 2010

DEVELOP IN BRIGHTON
July 13th to 15th
Brighton, UK
www.develop-conference.com

DEVELOP AWARDS
July 14th
Brighton, UK
www.develop-online.net

CASUAL CONNECT SEATTLE
July 20th to 22nd
Seattle, US
seattle.casualconnect.org

AUGUST 2010

GAMESCOM 2010
August 18th to 22nd
Cologne, Germany
www.gamescom-cologne.com

OCTOBER 2010

CASUAL CONNECT KYIV
October 20th to 22nd
Kiev, Ukraine
kyiv.casualconnect.org

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WorldView

Our monthly digest of the past month's global games development news…

DEALS

Chinese developer **Yooee** has signed **NaturalMotion's** morpheme for its ambitious new combination of MMO and 3D social network, *HapaMe*.

NaturalMotion's morphene has also been licensed by hungarian independant **Zen Studios** for an unannounced XBLA and PSN title.

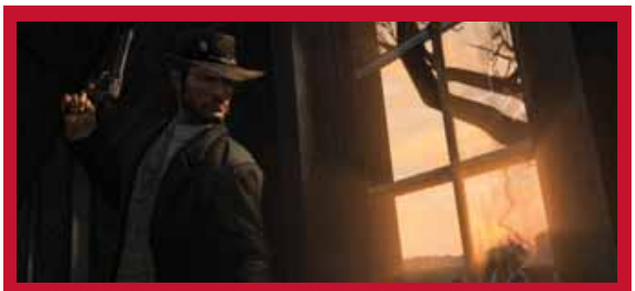
Dave Perry's cloud-based streaming game venture **Gaikai** has received $5m in venture capitalist investment.

Continuing its ongoing expansion, China's outsourcing group **Virtuos** has acquired Russian concept art studio **Grafit**.

San Francisco's new social game studio **DNA Games** has raised some $2 million in VC funds as it prepares to go public.

Audio recording and score composition firm **Roc Music Studio** has partnered with translation and quality assurance studio **Monde Media** to offer a more complete service.

Silicon Studio has signed with publisher **South Peak** to ensure that its retro-inspired game *3D Dot Heroes* sees release in Europe.



ROCKSTAR OUTCRY RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT CRUNCH

Rockstar Games has finally spoken on the record in the wake of accusations about working practices at its San Diego studio.

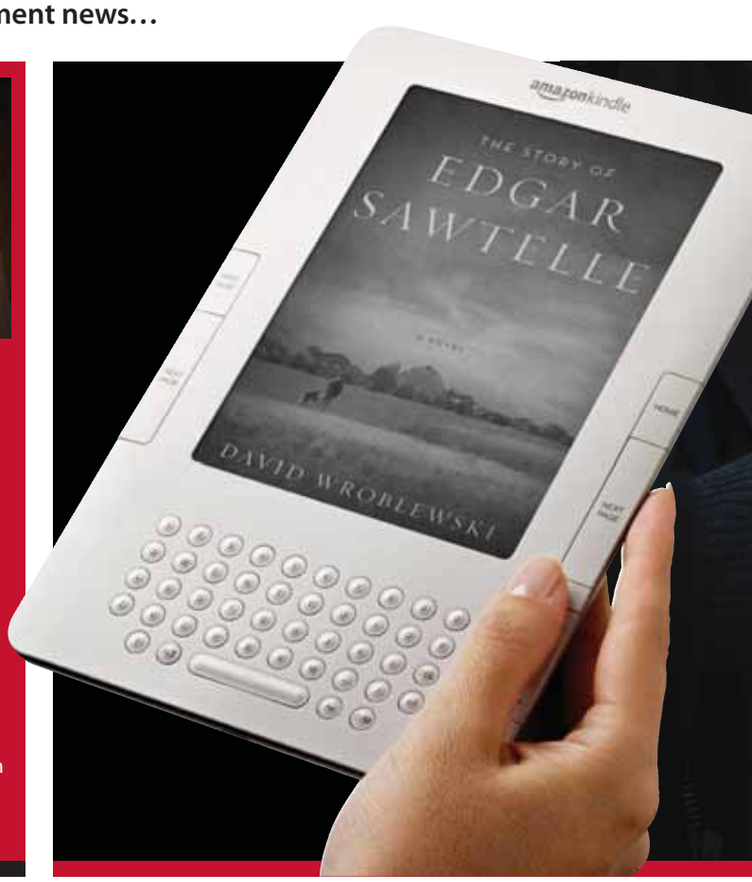
A statement posted on its official reader response blog conceded that there are 'challenges' in games development, but that it was 'saddened' some staff felt under too much pressure.

The company responsible for games including *Grand Theft Auto*, *Manhunt* and *Bully* added that its managment does its best to fully support the teams it employs 'in every way that we can'.

Accusations against the firm first emerged earlier this month when spouses of the Rockstar San Diego staff claimed the studio was forcing its staff to work 12-hour days.

"We're saddened if any former members of any studio did not find their time here enjoyable or creatively fulfilling and wish them well with finding an environment more suitable to their temperaments and needs," read the blog.

www.rockstargames.com



UNITED KINGDOM

JAGEX OPENING PUBLISHING DIVISION

Cambridge developer Jagex is planning to open an entire publishing division.

That's according to CEO Mark Gerhard, who told *Develop* the firm's plans following the news that the huge studio moved into third-party publishing with War of Legends.

"This whole new endeavor, if you will, is really something we're looking to gear up," said Gerhard. "We're looking to find more talented studios that are looking to get into the online space, and bring them to market."

He later added: "We're actually trying to build a complete division out of it."

www.jagex.com

FRANCE

UBISOFT TO CAP GLOBAL DEV HEADCOUNT

Global publishing empire Ubisoft will see staff count reductions at some of its studios following news that the firm has lowered annual sales targets.

Company CEO Yves Guillemot admitted that there will be a diminished workforce at some studios as the business expands its other facilities and keeps its staff count flat.

"We are going to stabilise our account, so the goal is not to increase too much the number of people that [work for us]," he said. "There will be some countries that will increase [staff] and some that will decrease."

www.ubi.com

CHINA

SHANDA SEALS $80M MOCHI MEDIA BUYOUT

One of China's leading online game companies will pay as much as $80 million to acquire the US-based online game distribution firm Mochi Media.

Shanda Games has a strong position in the online space, having structured its business to have resources for game development, online maintenance, and publishing.

Its bid to acquire Mochi Media – which has been agreed but needs to be finalised – is clearly a move which positions Shanda on the global stage.

San Francisco based Mochi Media's online game network currently has over 140 million monthly users playing through its 15,000 browser-based games.

ir1.snda.com

UNITED KINGDOM

TIGA-ELSPA MERGER PROPOSALS REJECTED

Opposition minister Ed Vaizey has pursued the idea of Tiga and ELSPA merging since as far backas 2006.

Now both industry associations have opposed the idea according to Vaizey.

"I have spoken to Tiga and ELSPA about joining forces for years and they've both told me not to do that," he said at a Westminster event last month.

Tiga and ELSPA share many common interests for the good of the British games sector, and Vaizey is certainly not the first to suggest that ELSPA should unite with Tiga

Vaizey's revelation of both parties' opposition to the move was interestingly timed; Tiga CEO Richard Wilson was sitting on the same panel table, and ELSPA president Mike Rawlinson was in the audience.

www.tiga.org

UNITED STATES

EPIC JOINS KHRONOS AS FOCUS SHIFTS TO MOBILES

Engine and software giant Epic has joined industry consortium Khronos.

The Khronos Group is an industry consortium with a collective interest in the creation of API standards.

As a member of Khronos' board of promoters, Epic now has significant sway in determining the evolutionary path of graphics standards on key platforms including mobiles.

Khronos president Neil Trevett, who also serves as vice president of mobile content at Nvidia, said Epic would bring "enormous insight into the evolution of the OpenGL and OpenGL ES specifications that will benefit the entire industry."

www.epicgames.com

UNITED KINGDOM

REBELLION CONFIRMS RESTRUCTURE

Rebellion has confirmed that it has initiated a company restructure.

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Our online resource features news, features, analysis and commentary posted daly, and is avaulable via the web, mobile, RSS and daily email and news alert blasts.

DEV KIT FOR KINDLE E-READER REVEALED

Amazon has confirmed it will release an app development kit for its Kindle e-reader.

Named the KDK, the platform will allow for the creation of games and apps for the device, which will be sold through an App Store-style service.

The platform is initially entering a limited beta phase, which will let registered participants help analyse the functionality of the KDK, access developer support and test content and submissions on Kindle.

"The Kindle Development Kit includes sample code, documentation, and the Kindle Simulator, which helps developers build and test their content by simulating the 6-inch Kindle and 9.7-inch Kindle DX on Mac, PC, and Linux desktops," reads an official statement from Amazon. "We are excited to see what you invent for Kindle."

KDK-developed apps, which have an upper size limit of 100Mb, can be sold as one-time purchases, for a monthly subscription or given away free. Amazon will take a 30 per cent revenue share of any sold apps, with the developer taking the rest.

KDK-created apps larger than 10MB will not be delivered wirelessly through the device, but can be downloaded from the Kindle Store to a computer, before being transferred to the user's Kindle via USB.

www.amazon.com/kdk

Part of the move puts the staff at its Derby studio under consultation as the lease on that studio expires.

The news counters speculation that the Derby operation was set to close. Meanwhile the firm says it is still committed to growing the staff as its Oxford HQ and expand its Runcorn base.

A statement from the firm reads: "Leading independent videogames developer Rebellion today announced that corporate restructuring will take advantage of the expanded facilities at their Oxford Head Quarters and the Runcorn studio. The Derby facility, acquired from Eidos, is coming to the end of its lease, and staff are being consulted on its future."

Jason Kingsley, CEO and Creative Director of Rebellion added: "We are very excited about the expansion of our Oxford offices, the home of *Aliens vs. Predator*. Recruitment is ongoing both in Oxford and in Runcorn."

www.rebellion.co.uk

JAPAN

CAPCOM TO ADJUST OVERSEAS DEV DEALS

Capcom believes that its partnership with Swedish studio Grin had "demonstrated the difficulty" of outsourcing projects to third parties outside of its native Japan.

The firm said in an investor Q&A that it would change the way it handles third party partnerships, and that it will delegate new IP projects primarily to its Japanese studios.

"Overseas companies may be used mostly to develop titles for existing game series with well-established characters," said the firm.

Capcom had signed an agreement with independent developer Grin to create a number of multiplatform titles – such as a mysterious *Final Fantasy* game as well as the poorly-received *Bionic Commando*.

After poor sales of the latter title, Grin finally buckled under sustained financial pressure and – in August 2009 – closed its doors completely.

In wake of the turmoil, Capcom has now revealed that "[our] experience with *Bionic Commando* has demonstrated the difficulty of outsourcing the development of new title to overseas companies."

www.capcom.com

CANADA

BIOWARE COMMITS TO 360 FOR MASS EFFECT 3

Acclaimed Canadian outfit BioWare is already confirming that *Mass Effect 3* will be developed for the Xbox 360 – months after studio co-founder Greg Zeschuk said the PS3 is now a "key platform" for the group.

The EA-owned studio has in recent months played down speculation that *Mass Effect* games will be arriving on Sony's home console. The recently released *Dragon Age: Origins* is the first BioWare game to appear on a PlayStation platform since *MDK 2* landed on the PS2 in 2001.

www.bioware.com

SAY WHAT?!?

"They have Warcraft but what else do they have? You paid seven million! That's insane!"

Activision Blizzard CEO Bobby Kotick recounts to Game Informer Magazine his reaction to the Blizzard buyout in 1995.

"Well, 12 million doesn't sound like a big number to me."

Blizzard's Mike Morhaime comes over all modest following news that WoW now courts a record number of subscribers.

"I'm enjoying these games more than I am enjoying films at the moment."

Film director Peter Jackson confesses to Ain't It Cool News that Modern Warfare 2 is becoming a bit of an obsession.

"Most snarky critics had their minds set before ever seeing/playing the game. I'm proud of what we created."

Tony Hawk tweets a fair point in responce to the largely negative critical reception enjoyed by Ride, to which he put his name.

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS SPONSORED BY Bethesda SOFTWORKS

COMMENT: BUSINESS

An offer you can refuse?

by Rick Gibson, Games Investor Consulting

When Zynga was hit by a scandal around advertising offers late last year, many commentators cried foul, claiming that the company was dodgy and unethical. A Ratner-like moment of honesty by its CEO at a conference was cited as proof that Zynga was knowingly fleecing customers using scams. Columnists heralded Facebook's suspension of apps which promoted the scam. Zynga got its just rewards – half its revenues were threatened, pundits forecast.

Now's a good opportunity to investigate the murky world of such offers, and assess both the scandal and the revenue stream's potential for online game operators.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The offers market's roots were in e-loyalty companies like Beenz or MyPoints, which awarded cost-conscious consumers virtual currency for completing surveys or signing up to e-commerce promotions. After initial consumer interest, they lost momentum by failing to popularise their artificial currency, losing out to client brands' own loyalty schemes and cash-back sites. Meanwhile online advertising was booming, with high values paid for cost per acquisition. As e-loyalty companies faded, new advertising middlemen aggregated and sold on these lead generation promotions to a wide range of sites such as Skype, Gap, Real and Adobe, incentivising larger purchases or converting free visitors wanting premium content but reluctant to pay.

In late 2008, offers found their perfect partner with social network games operators, who could now monetise free players by establishing an exchange rate between their virtual currencies and CPA offers. Offers like 'Try out Netflix for a month and get 80 Playfish cash' were brokered by Trialpay for Playfish and other clients, attracting advertisers such as American Express, Disney, Time Magazine and even Weightwatchers. Powered by mainstream advertising dollars, offers initially drove a third of a social network game's revenues, although this fell as direct item sales grew through 2009.

From the late 2000s, criminal gangs have posed as advertising buyers from kosher, big-name companies. They cold-call advertising sales representatives desperately searching to shift their unsold ad inventory, placing bogus ads laced with malware. Many were taken in by the scams. Sites like Google, Fox News and even the New York Times were fooled by malicious ads that looked real but contaminated visitors' PCs.

In late October, it was Zynga's turn to be scammed. A company called Tatto Media created ads promising IQ test scores but fraudulently signing people up to $9.99 subscriptions via premium SMS. Tatto distributed it via several offers companies, including a Zynga offers partner called DoubleDing. DoubleDing failed to double-check the offer. Thousands were scammed. Facebook cried foul, pulling the offending applications. A video surfaced showing Zynga's Marc Pincus admitting he'd done 'horrible things' to get Zynga's revenue flowing. Accusations of unethical behaviour were hurled. Zynga's minority stake in DoubleDing muddied the water further and it struggled to win back the media initiative. Finally, Facebook as well as Zynga was served with the latest in a series of lawsuits flying around a new sector.

What's interesting in the coverage is the moral outrage, often reminiscent of tabloid editorials. Take the criticism of Zynga for not cleaning scammed users' PCs: when *The New York Times* unwittingly ran a fake Vonage maleware ad, it offered users advice and was in turn offered sympathy for being scammed. Zynga, despite itself being a victim, was excoriated in a noisy witch hunt.

> ***"Should you make use of offers alongside your premium virtual currency? Yes, as long as you use one of the larger, better providers."***

To say much of the complaints were unreasonable is an understatement, like demanding Zynga check every piece of advertising run by someone else on its gigantic service. Many whiffed of *schadenfreude*, since there was nothing intentional about Zynga's role in the scam, beyond seeking revenues by a route all its competitors use. All Zynga could do was apologise, admit failings which it hoped to fix and force its advertising sellers to institute better controls.

Games like Zynga's Mafia Wars built massive audiences by attracting consumers with incentivising consumer schemes

AFTER THE STORM

Eight weeks on, what has been the fall-out? All Zynga's apps are live again. Its traffic dipped momentarily before powering onwards, reaching 100 million monthly users. It is currently instituting new standards for its offers partners which will soon return. Despite senior staff at other social network games companies being sniffy about offers, they are still standard. The biggest players in social network games all still use them, including Playdom and EA's Playfish.

While offers, like e-loyalty companies before them, could be replaced by operator discounts or cash-backs, I think they are more likely to survive and grow as advertising slowly revives. Following a wave of proliferation, many offers companies will die off or be consolidated, but the larger ones with anti-fraud measures and big brand clients will thrive – because they reach a large but inaccessible audience with more concrete leads than vanilla advertising.

So, if you're looking at payment mechanisms for your online proposition, should you make use of offers alongside your premium virtual currency? Yes, as long as you use one of the larger, better providers which check their inventory and offer high levels of service and customisability. Most offers are harmless, can help your site generate revenue from free players and may be your only meaningful advertising revenues this side of 2011.

Rick Gibson is a director at Games Investor Consulting, providing research, strategy consulting and corporate finance services to the games, media and finance industries.
www.gamesinvestor.com

COMMENT: INDUSTRY

Eye candy loses its lustre

by Owain Bennallack

Like a lot of older gamers, my poison of choice is PC games – and those games don't need to be spring chickens.

I've been hiding from the snow all winter by battling the Danes and the Mongols across a frozen Europe in *Medieval II: Total War*. That this game was released in 2007 bothers me not a jot. It flies on my PC with nearly all the effects turned up to 11, and it's still stunning.

Similarly, a friend stopped by at the weekend with a copy of *Crysis* he'd picked up in the sales. Soon we were marvelling at the dappled light on the forest floors, a perfect illusion of sunlight filtering through the destructible canopy above.

"Turn around!" I suggested after my friend's particularly sharp sprint through the undergrowth, and sure enough the disturbed ferns were settling into position in his wake. Marvellous and, again, over two years old.

Admittedly *Crysis* is a special case – with its bleeding-edge technology it was some months from release before it became playable on the average new PC. And we'd patched it, too, which might have added some extra flourishes. But the point stands – unless you're 15-years old or a games developer, great graphics in PC games no longer go stale faster than fresh fish.

YOU'VE BEEN FRAMED

As someone who lived through the three years that separated pseudo-3D *Doom* from look-anywhere 3D *Quake* (via spin-anywhere *Descent*), it's hard not to be taken aback by this slowdown in the rate of PC graphical advancement.

The phenomenon has already been seen on console, too, with Nintendo twice releasing underpowered but cheaper machines that rely on software quality and controller novelty to step off the visual hamster wheel.

I even thought of it when I saw footage of *Gran Turismo 5* the other day. In my head, it just looks like *Gran Turismo* always did. Yes, it's easy to see the difference between the new game and its last outing way back in 2005 on PlayStation 2 if you compare two screenshots, let alone two videos, but who plays a game with one eye on a screenshot?

Gran Turismo's 'Look at that!' days are behind it.

GOLDEN OLDIES LIVE FOR LONGER

The not particularly revelatory observation that graphical advancement has slowed down has a few important consequences.

For starters, it supports the whole second-hand game sale business that has become so crucial to High Street retailers. If older games looked embarrassingly bad, they couldn't still be sold 12 months later. But they don't – to the average eye they look fine.

Or think of browser-based casual games, like PlayFish's *Word Challenge* on Facebook. *Word Challenge* runs on any half-decent personal computer, and as far as the audience is concerned, with its music and snazzy alphabet-based special effects, it's just what such a game should look like.

> ***"Yes, it's easy to see the difference between the new game and its last outing back in 2005 if you compare screenshots, but Gran Turismo's 'Look at that!' days are behind it."***

We take this for granted, but even five years ago what jogged along on one PC might have crawled on another. And with the tapering off of visual advances, browser-based casual games no longer look like the poor, destitute relation that Web games did a decade ago.

If the hardware cycle is 'over', I'd even pin that on the state of game graphics, too. If a console maker could deliver the same sort of step-change that PlayStation 2 represented over PlayStation, it'd be easier to justify the vast cost of a bespoke chipset and the equally huge marketing spend required to launch the new machine.

But the graphics won't deliver a step-change, and so perhaps the hardware can't be justified.

DO SOMETHING LESS BORING INSTEAD

Don't get me wrong – you can't skimp on graphics. But now that you can credibly buy it in, actually winning through graphical technology is a race left to maybe half a dozen studios in the world.

Is there much point in focusing on bleeding-edge graphics in a game like Gran Turismo 5?

Instead, it's adding innovative functionality enabled by internet connectivity, new controllers, or user-generated content that represents the low-hanging fruit for developers looking to get a few strides ahead. Realtime Worlds' *APB* is a great example of a sufficiently stunning looking game that is innovating wildly through the internet, rather than the graphical fireworks that set apart the new shooters of yesterday.

There's even the possibility that game developers could raise their sights to the other side of the uncanny valley, and push on with better character animation, AI and storytelling. Those are truly hard problems, but the de-escalation in the graphical arms race has produced a peace dividend in the form of freed-up resources to deploy on gaming's other challenges.

Owain Bennallack is executive editor of *Develop*. He edited the magazine from its launch until its February 2006 issue. He has also worked at *MCV* and *Edge*, and has provided consultancy and evaluation services to several leading developers and publishers. He is also chairman of the Develop Conference advisory board.

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS SPONSORED BY Bethesda SOFTWORKS

COMMENT: DESIGN

Keeping it simple

by Billy Thomson, Ruffian Games

It seems that most of highly anticipated games of 2010 are big blockbuster games, so I thought I'd go in the opposite direction and talk about some of the more simple games that I've enjoyed over the past few years.

What I love about these games is they only take a few minutes to play from start to finish, and they all have instant replay with a scoring system that means you always, always want one more go. This is the ultimate reaction any designer wants from a player who plays a game they designed.

Stair Dismount – Porrasturvat

When I first played this a good few years ago, our entire team at DMA lost so many hours to experimenting it.

The goal of the game is to throw a ragdoll character down a set of stairs and inflict as much damage as possible. All you do is choose the point and direction where the force is applied that pushes the character down the stairs.

The fun of the game comes from a multiplier system where each body part provides a different multiplier to the damage inflicted. Throwing someone down a set of stairs and praying that you've pushed them in the right direction to constantly smash their head off each step has never been so much fun.

It's one of those basic ideas that instantly gets you thinking of all the other games that could be made with that same damage score mechanic. Love it.

Cube Runner

This is easily my favourite iPhone game. You steer a flying craft by tilting the iPhone left or right; the craft moves forward at a constant speed and all you have to do is avoid the blocks that appear in front of you for as long as you can.

The game looks awful, and if you play it on the easy or medium setting it's really dull, but if you play it on hard it really comes to life. Like a lot of these little games it's unbelievably infuriating, but you can get straight back into the game so quickly that you always want one more go. Every single person I've shown this game to has instantly downloaded it and they still have it installed.

I'd love to work on an update to this game because it's got so much untapped potential.

Canabalt

This is an incredibly simple concept: help a little guy run away from some unseen danger. All you need to do is press a single button to make him jump. The longer you press the button, the higher the jump. It's a case of seeing how far you can get him to run along the constantly varying set of platforms and obstacles before he is killed.

Timing the jumps is everything in this game, what I love about it is you don't blame the game when you fail, you blame yourself for being too slow or jumping too high.

My one complaint about this game – and *Cube Runner* – is once you get good at it, the difficult bit that you keep failing on is so far away from the start of the game that it becomes quite tedious trying to beat your high score. It's a small complaint, but it's something that I think could make these games even better.

> ***"In a financial climate where the vast majority of developers and publishers are playing it safe it's comforting to think that most of these games are free to play and came to life as the pet project of a single person."***

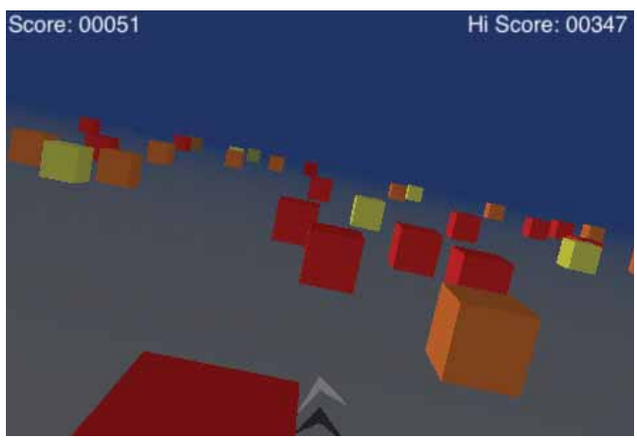
Orbital

I was told about this game by a guy I work with and, after my first play, I wasn't that impressed.

You tap the screen to release a little ball from the bottom of the screen that then bounces off the edges of the screen and expands in size after it comes to a halt. If any part of the ball touches the edge or another ball, it stops expanding. If any ball expands beyond the line at the bottom of the screen it's game over. If any stationary ball is hit three times by a moving ball it disappears and you score a point. That's it. I played it through again, then again and again and each time I got higher scores and learned different tactics to score more points.

For a game so simple, it requires a lot of skill and thought to get a good score. If you try it out I'd suggest you play on Gravity mode, which makes it even more interesting.

In a financial climate where the vast majority of game developers and publishers are focusing more and more on safe games that are almost guaranteed to make a profit, it's comforting to think that most of these games are free to play and came to life as the pet project of a single person – someone who made the game purely for the joy of making games that people would love to play.



Top: Speed running action game Canabalt Above: Tilt 'n' steer game Cube Runner Both are available now on iPhone

Billy Thomson is the creative director of newly-formed developer Ruffian Games. Billy has over 13 years experience of designing video games, including design roles on *Grand Theft Auto* and *GTA2*, before working as lead designer on Realtime Worlds' celebrated *Crackdown*.
www.ruffiangames.com

COMMENT: DESIGN

What's the story?

by David Braben, Frontier Developments

For those of you that don't know me, I started in the industry in the early '80s, co-writing *Elite* with Ian Bell, and going on to found Frontier. Frontier is one of the larger British developers, with 250 people based on Cambridge's Science Park. In these columns I'll be covering a wide range of topics, all sparked off by current game releases and events in the industry and all pertinent to game development.

Last week, I finished *Assassin's Creed II*: a good game, much less repetitious than the first, with an interestingly controversial ending to the story that I won't spoil for those who are not there yet. For me personally, it's great that storytelling is coming ever more to the fore, albeit in a linear and (at times) slightly confusing form as here. Ubisoft Montreal has done a great job of back-fitting a fantastical story to the hazy real-world events of the time. I know many people simply ignore the story - hammering the skip button to "get past all that guff", like the great character Vasquez in *Aliens* - "Look, man, I only need to know one thing: where-they-are" - but those people are missing out on so much.

MODERN MARVEL

To me the only failing in the otherwise truly excellent *Modern Warfare 2* was that the story felt quite old school – as if it was written after the levels were in place, or by someone with that same 'it doesn't matter' mentality. I too was left feeling that it didn't matter, so it might as well be skipped; a loose excuse to join together a snow section, an oil rig section and so on. There might as well have been a lava level, for all that the story mattered to me. The controversial airport section was a case in point – not only was it unnecessary, it felt tacked on, and didn't fit well with the game.

Having said that, *Modern Warfare 2* was a tour de force and by far best-in-class at what it does well, and its commercial success shows that. In this case I don't think a great story would have made much difference to sales; that is not why people are buying it. There is enough story to contextualise the fire-fights, which is all it needs. My point is that when we look back at it from the future – when the combat is no longer best in class – it will feel dull, like those almost storyless cowboy films of the '50s (not featuring John Wayne), shown endlessly on TV in the early '70s, but that have thankfully now been forgotten. Perhaps this doesn't matter with *Modern Warfare 2* – it has made its money.

But because *Modern Warfare 2* gets away with it, we shouldn't assume others will in the future, including *Modern Warfare 3* – especially without Infinity Ward's magic gameplay fairy dust.

The Force Unleashed had a story smartly woven into the Star Wars mythos, but the gameplay arguably ruined the execution

> ***"There might as well have been a lava level in Modern Warfare 2, for all that the story mattered to me. The controversial airport level is a case in point – it felt tacked on and didn't fit with the game."***

An interesting comparison is my favourite game of 2008, *Fallout 3*. Though it didn't sparkle graphically, it was carried by the intricate detail of the little sub-plots within the game world, which fitted together very well, greatly enhancing the richness of the world for me. The other side of the coin was *The Force Unleashed*. This weaved a new story in the *Star Wars* pantheon, ending with Princess Leia getting on a starship with the Death Star plans – the same small starship that gets captured by Darth Vader's iconic Star Destroyer at the start of the epic 1977 *Star Wars* film. A truly amazing thing for a huge *Star Wars* fan like me – the start of one of the most memorable films of all time. This excellent setting was tragically let down by the gameplay, which could have been so good given the subject matter.

WRITING OUR OWN DESTINY

In my opinion storytelling is increasingly a potential major part of a game, something I think that is likely to define this current fifth generation of gaming - it is therefore a foolhardy thing to ignore. Recent non-linear games like *Fallout 3*, *Mass Effect* and *Dragon Age: Origins* are virtually carried by their rich stories; the opposite of *Modern Warfare 2*, where the story is carried by the gameplay.

A major problem is that incorporating rich story early on in development runs contrary to the way many games are developed today. Old level-based concepts like 'playable levels' and 'vertical slice' look solely at gameplay and graphics – clearly important – but ignore story; something often relegated to a sentence in a design document, until some poor writer has to cobble something together.

The truth of the matter is that both storytelling and gameplay are important. Let's do our best to avoid having 'story' games or 'gameplay' games almost as different genres.

David Braben is the founder of Cambridge-based Frontier Developments. Best known as the co-creator of *Elite*, Braben has contributed to, designed or overseen a number of other projects including *Frontier: Elite II*, *Dog's Life*, *Thrillville* and *LostWinds*. Frontier is currently developing his next title, *The Outsider*. He is also closely involved with Skillset.

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS SPONSORED BY Bethesda SOFTWORKS

COMMENT: PRODUCTION

Gamefest 2010

by Ben Board, Microsoft

You can imagine the scene. Some wag, in some meeting, somewhere, hits upon a particularly droll metaphor to capture the concept of unveiling undisclosed information to a wider audience: to wit, 'opening the kimono'. It spreads faster than 'I Can't Believe It's Not Butter'. What's most startling is that, in this wildfire's smouldering wake, this arresting idiom has become a straight-faced replacement for 'going public'.

Working for a US company brings a whole new corporate vocabulary. One is not merely especially pleased; one is 'super jazzed'. I don't ring anyone any more, I 'put in a call' – or if I have some weighty update to deliver to several of my contacts, it graduates to a 'calldown'. Talk not of PowerPoint presentations, for I know only of 'decks'; goodness knows my laptop contains enough of them to build a cruise liner. Filled with DJs and skateboarders. All playing Bridge.

But I'm powerless to resist. This month I have something to be super jazzed about. It's all about the decks and kimono obi shall be tantalisingly loosened: Gamefest is back.

> ***"We've been building a schedule, visiting venues and sampling sandwiches. The result is an event that is a must for anyone working on Microsoft platforms."***

Gamefest is Microsoft's own development conference: a two-day, multi-track buffet of full-fat Xbox 360 and Windows gaming goodness delivered by the people who actually do the work. The European event will be taking place in London on February 24th and 25th at Chelsea FC's Stamford Bridge, two weeks after the US version in Seattle. It is open to all developers with a relevant agreement with Microsoft – XDK, Games for Windows LIVE or the US's Registered Developers Program.

We've spent recent months soliciting talks from all corners of XNA – the development wing of Team Xbox that provides the XDK libraries and tools, whitepapers, websites and the camo-daubed code marines behind the GameDS support list – as well as MGS and a few third party special guests. We've been building a schedule, visiting venues and sampling sandwiches, and the result is a conference that is a must for anyone who builds games on Microsoft platforms.

Natal was praised by Steven Spielberg at E3 – and the device is a centrepiece of February's Gamefest conference

This is your best chance to get the skinny on the latest platform initiatives, the priorities of the business, and new ways to improve your title's performance – on the silicon, over the speakers, across Live, against the schedule, through certification, in reviews and at retail – straight from the horse's mouth.

PRE-NATAL

The headline, though, is Natal. You've probably gathered that Project Natal occupies the top spot on our priority list this year, but understandably we've had to keep our metaphorical clothing pretty tightly secured for all but our closest Natal partners (OK, enough, I promise never to mention kimonos again). However, at this conference the very latest insights and updates will be available to a broader audience and in greater depth than before. Xbox developers will have access to tracks dedicated to working with this remarkable device, not just from a technical perspective, but also by introducing the new directions in which gaming without a controller pushes us to think about design and production. Those team members and presenters will be able to take your questions both during the sessions and wandering the corridors and lunch halls between, so be sure to take advantage.

As I write, the schedule is still at a draft stage, but you can count on it covering a broad range of development topics. For a start, the two Natal tracks will discuss the design and technical aspects of this new way of making games. Non-coders will see sessions ranging from marketing to QA planning, via advice for gesture-based control in games, designing without buttons, multiplayer and using speech as an input. Accompanying these are programmer-facing sessions to encourage the efficient development of those features and more.

As well as the Natal content there's a raft of low-level tech material on subjects including profiling, optimisation and VMX, compression and new software releases such as Visual Studio 2010 and DirectX 11, our latest Windows games API. While there's plenty for coders of all stripes to get their teeth into, don't overlook the event if you're a producer, artist, designer, or in biz dev, audio or QA. We have a strong set of certification talks and updates on the Games for Windows program, plus discussions on best practices for DLC and UGC on our platforms. Check out the listings whatever your discipline.

By the time you read this the presenters will be sweating over final drafts, while the tracks and registration details will be laid out at microsoftgamefest.com. Charlie, Allan and I will be in Chelsea, fully jazzed. See you there.

Ben Board is European developer account manager at Microsof, supporting all studios working on games for Xbox and Games For Windows platforms. He previously worked as a producer at the l.ikes of Bullfrog, EA and Lionhead.

BETA

DEVELOPMENT FEATURES, INTERVIEWS, ESSAYS & MORE

RECRUITMENT SPECIAL:
13 pages of career advice, plus job market insight and data, p21

Salary Survey

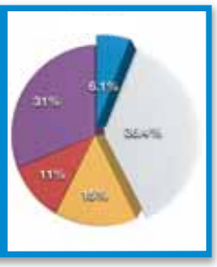
p26

Recruiters sound off on the job market

p21

IGDA reveals Quality of Live survey data

p36



The Jagex Factor

A rare glimpse inside the 400-strong Cambridge studio responsible for one of the world's most popular online games, p18

The Jagex Factor

While Jagex's output is highly regarded, relatively little is known about the studio's unique approach to development. **Will Freeman** took at tour of the home of RuneScape to learn more…

CEO Mark Gerhard (centre, left) and COO Rob Smith work hard to ensure Jagex retains its flat management and production structure to make sure staff are empowered

Mention Jagex, and for most, *RuneScape* springs to mind immediately. People certainly know what the Cambridge studio has created, but the developer's lead IP – an MMO with unique youth appeal launched in 2001 – is so successful it has rather eclipsed the way the company operates.

Press a little further, and people might mutter something about FunOrb or the time Jon Hare joined the team, but in reality relatively little is known about the company by all but the keenest industry observers.

"Historically we've said very little and done very little publically," admits CEO Mark Gerhard. "One of the problems that creates is that it leaves people to make up their own mythos about what Jagex is, and what we do and how we do it."

The reason for the team's hush isn't that they're media shy, but rather they've been busy. *RuneScape* keeps a huge team of programmers, artists, online security staff and moderators working quite literally day and night at Jagex's sprawling facility, thanks to the enthusiasm of the record-breaking free MMO's userbase.

A similarly huge group generate more accessible games for the FunOrb portal, while dozens who were at work on the canned *MechScape* MMO rework the fruits of their labour for a new project.

Over 400 are now employed at Jagex, and that number is increasingly consistently.

CHAMPAGNE SUPERNOVA

It isn't that Jagex is completely without recognition; quite the opposite is true. In 2009 it was awarded the UK Developer of the Year gong at high profile consumer event the Golden Joysticks. "I've never seen ten people simultaneously spit their champagne out," jokes Gerhard on remembering the reaction of fellow attendees at the extravagant ceremony.

"As far as the industry goes, we're still a bit of an enigma.

"People don't realise that we're this large, quirky company based in Cambridge. When people think of British games, perhaps they think of the traditional options like Codemasters and Lionhead; the studios that are publically more vocal."

Developers often season their profiles with terms like 'quirky', making it easy to dismiss Jagex's claim to individuality. However when Develop visits their bustling creative hub, it becomes apparent that the company – established in 1999 and officially founded by Andrew and Paul Gower in 2001 – certainly boasts a distinct approach to building and maintaining games.

> ***"Operationally we're totally different from any other studio. We've use proprietary tools for almost every part of the development process."***
>
> Mark Gerhard, CEO, Jagex

"Operationally we're totally different from any other studio I've ever seen, even to the point that we've built our own tools to change the way we handle the development processes," says Gerhard. "The content developers have access to all the tools to create their own content, whereas at other studios normally it's much more of a production line."

Jagex's list of proprietary and customised tech is a truly impressive one. Everything relating directly to development side is proprietary, as are numerous tools, the cryptography, compression, protocol, bug tracking and web-servers. The studio has even conceived its own kernel for Unix, and down to the byte level, if it can be proprietary, it invariably is. Gerhard meekly admits the email software is now bought in from the outside world, but not so long ago, even that was a custom app.

The idea is that at almost every level of a game's development, staff of any discipline can access the tools to realise their vision. With tools available to all their developers, and teams working as autonomous, de-coupled units, Jagex hopes to avoid the 'production line' model that it believes curses some other studios.

LOST IN TRANSLATION

"Every time something gets lost in translation as it goes from one team to the next team as someone does the coding, and someone comes back and does the graphics and then somebody does the QA," say Gerhard of more typical development houses' structures. "In our mind that's slightly disjointed. What we've done is we've built our own tools with usability in mind. So, for example, the same guys writing the story can use these tools to very quickly put together the entire game, and ask 'Is it fun? Does it work?' It remains creative-centric."

As apparently avid gamers who Gerhard reveals have never worked anywhere else, the Gowers' founding influence still prevails, and is seen by the staff as the root of Jagex's continued individuality.

"It's an inverted triangle compared to any other company I've seen, in terms of how we do stuff. Very often we have to re-invent the wheel because what we just don't fit into the traditional business model. We like it," says Gerhard with a contented smile.

Gerhard insists Jagex's atypical structure and approach isn't a case of being contrary to convention for the sake of standing out, and it's a business model not without its challenges. In an industry full of well-established round holes, being a square peg can often create a great deal of work, particularly when it comes to recruitment.

"It does take a substantial amount of re-education, because people coming into our family are going to spend pretty much a year being trained," admits Gerhard. "At the end of the day it doesn't matter if you're a computer science graduate – if you are we'll spend three months teaching you to forget everything you've earned, six months teaching you our own tech, and another three months of intensive mentorship.

Jagex now employs 400 staff in Cambridge – a far cry from being first established by two brothers in 1999

"It's a big investment, but no one has ever left our game engine team or our tools team – we've had 100 per cent retention."

Despite the challenges, Gerhard and his colleagues remain proud of their position in the sector, and their commitment to the player. The CEO is quick to admit his employees and players come first, before any reputation in the wider industry.

"Typically, for everyone else I think it's the other way round," he suggests. Furthermore, in the face of an increasingly investment funded sector, he is happy to admit Jagex is not motivated by building for a sale or chasing market share.

YE OLDE DEVELOPMENT SHOP

"It's probably best described as an old fashioned business, in terms of the values. We're built on integrity and great product. The customer is our focus and things are done for the long term."

Despite evoking an image of some post-war family business in a fabled era when people held street parties and borrowed sugar from neighbours, Jagex is growing in size. Along with its ever-increasing head count, its catalogue of IP is eternally growing.

A separate building in Cambridge houses the team behind online gaming portal FunOrb, which deftly blends hardcore retro gaming and casual titles. With almost 40 games published on FunOrb at the time of *Develop*'s visit, and 60 potential projects underway, the portal is certainly proliferating. It also acts as a testing ground for Jagex to toy with ideas in the public domain, and every title underway for FunOrb has the potential to become a large-scale game for Jagex. An atmosphere of experimentation is actively encouraged at the company, and R&D remains a prime interest within the walls of Jagex.

There's also been some recent internal activity at the developer, with Rob Smith, who previously handled operational duties, team management and efficiency, being promoted to COO.

> ***"Our values are best described as old fashioned. We're built on integrity and great product. The customer is our focus and things are done for the long term."***
>
> Mark Gerhard, CEO, Jagex

"We looked at the core facets of what I did and I'm now working with the game design teams to ensure that *RuneScape* continues to be a success, and that we're continuing to grow our other games," explains Smith. "As everyone is so busy, in some ways I'm here to step back and take at look at what's working well and who might work well as a team and bring those teams together."

"He's the oil between all the gears of the machine," adds Gerhard, who explains with great pride that Jagex consists of a very flat management structure, once again bucking

industry trends. In a company where there's an apparent sense of employee equality, only three levels exist, from the army of games makers up to the senior staff.

As Gerhard plays enthusiastic tour guide to *Develop's* visit, making introductions in the security office, the moderating rooms and the numerous socialising areas that staff can use at weekends with friends, he makes passing reference to the fact the developer plans to occasionally publish games by other indies.

Things are clearly going very well at the home of *RuneScape*, and an approach Gerhard describes as "a deep sense of pragmatism, and even intellectualism" certainly seems to be working very well in Jagex's corner of Cambridge. In every room new developments are underway. There's even a space reserved for employees to work on labours of love independent of Jagex.

However a glance into the personal project area shows the desktops are vacant for now. Everybody really does seem enamoured by the myriad projects underway at Jagex. What Gerhard calls 'tribe spirit' prevails, and is certainly working for the quirky Cambridge studio nobody knows anything about.

www.jagex.com

Opinion: Recruitment in 2010

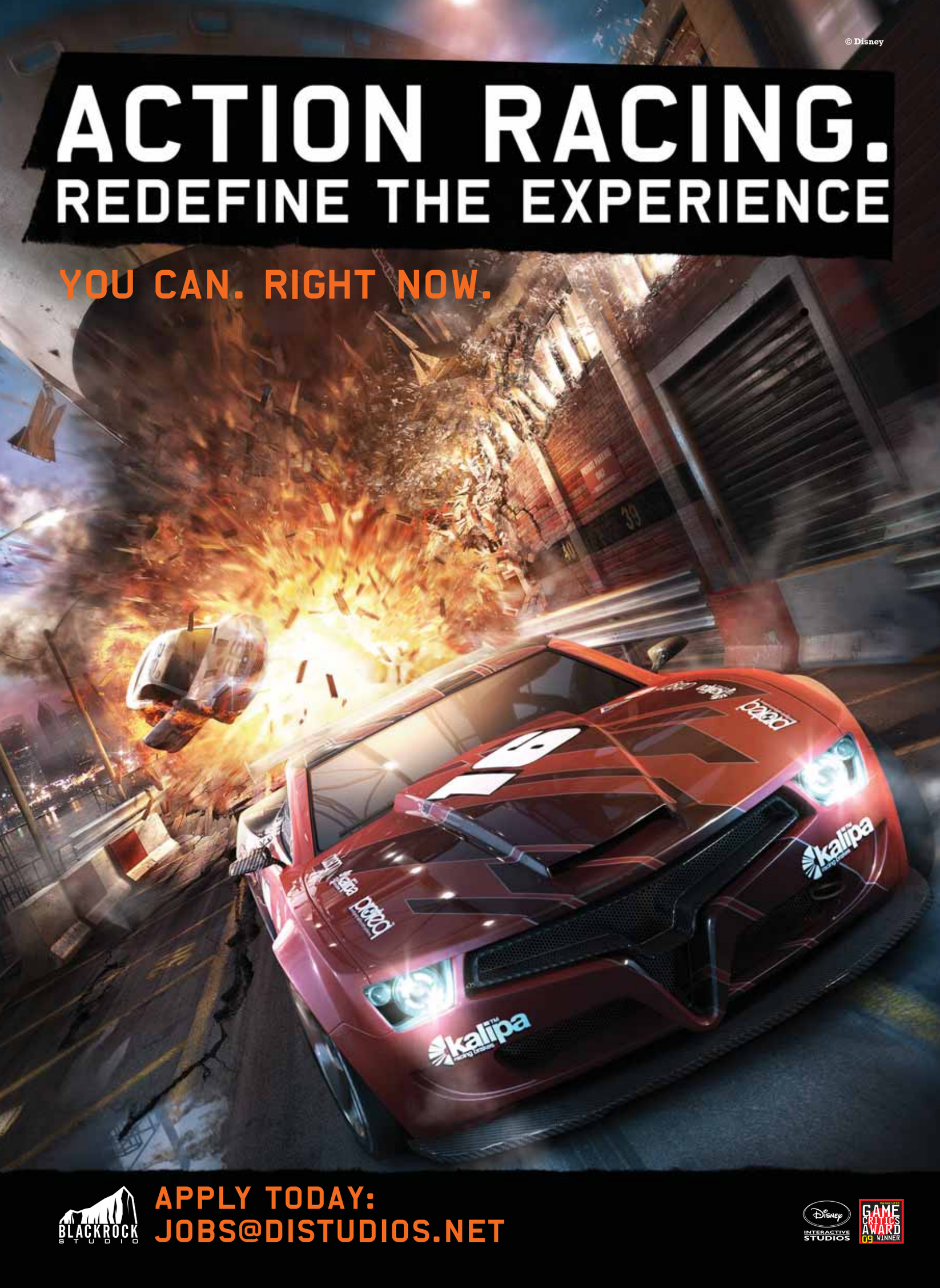
Having assembled a panel of key recruiters and employers, **Develop** asks the tough questions about the jobs market in the year ahead…

As the industry diversifies and the development studio template evolves, productive recruitment is becoming an increasingly more delicate act.

New roles and disciplines require equally fresh approaches, and as the number of potential employees climbs, so does the effort required to find the right staff member.

At the same time, the task of securing a job is becoming ever more challenging for those looking for a change of career or new position. The recruitment sector is particularly competitive as the global economy clambers free of recession, and the pressure on prospective employees is higher than it has ever been.

All that considered, *Develop* called together some of the games makers and recruiters with the most experience, and asked them for their predictions and advice for those providing and pursuing new jobs throughout 2010.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BLACKROCK STUDIO
Disney INTERACTIVE STUDIOS
GAME CRITICS AWARD '09 WINNER

What are the biggest challenges currently facing those in the games industry looking to recruit?

Kim Adcock, managing director, OPM Response

"Many companies reduced their HR departments and number of managers during the recession. They are now struggling to cope with the additional workload created now that they are growing again. They need to hire new people to manage the workload, but don't have time to do so, being so busy already; there's also budget to consider, although things are definitely getting better. We're not out of the woods yet. Therefore 2010 to 2011 budgeting may be as tight as last year."

Peter Lovell, recruitment advisor, Jagex

"Over the past two years we have seen increased competition within the online gaming sector, which presents the challenge of getting our message across amongst a larger crowd. We have also seen so many studio closures and numerous reports of poor working practices, which I believe damages the reputation of the industry as a whole."

Tony Beckwith, vice president and general manager, Black Rock Studio

"I have a firm belief that you have to hire the best talent in the world and not just hire locally. The challenge then becomes how to reach out as far as possible and get noticed."

Stig Strand, head of games recruitment team, Amiqus

"Due to the rarity of skills within certain disciplines, studios are sometimes not giving themselves enough lead time to source for specific technical disciplines that can take up to three-to-six months to find and attract the right people into the roles."

Andy Cambell, CEO, Specialmove

"We are certainly seeing more requirements for the 'sell in' of benefits of working in a particular area with a particular company. No longer is it purely the project that drives the interest but security and career development potential. So companies who are looking to recruit need to make sure they are not only offering competitive packages, but really selling the benefits of why their company/location/project is such a great place to work."

What should development companies do to better their chances of finding the right employee in the industry environment as it currently stands?

Stig Strand

"Companies should firstly have a structured recruitment/interviewing process that makes the potential employee feel wanted but challenged during the interview. Nowadays, with more candidates having more than just one company to consider, the process will play a key part of securing the decision of the interviewee."

Tony Beckwith

"To find the needle in the haystack you need a big magnet. Companies don't find top talent – talent finds companies. You need to lay down a path for the talent to find you. Being part of a major global entertainment company helps. Making top quality product is the other piece to this. You have to be in the top ten per cent – even the top five per cent – of developer rankings in terms of product quality."

Peter Lovell

"We pride ourselves on being open with salary information at the application stage. Too much of this industry is shrouded in mystery and I don't think it helps attract candidates when everyone seems so reluctant to disclose salary information on job adverts; how often do we see 'negotiable' instead of a figure for example? I think the culture of secrecy needs to stop."

Andy Cambell

"Before a company even thinks about how to get new staff, it must figure first what skills it lacks, why, who it needs and when it needs the resource to be in place and functioning based on its business commitments. These are far more important considerations than the mechanics of how."

Kim Adcock

"No longer can you assume it is an employer's market. I'd advise you don't offer unrealistically low salaries to new employees just because they are out of work. Candidates might keep looking if they feel undervalued, and now vacancies are increasing they have a better chance of moving on, leaving you with the cost of replacement."

Do you see the amount of vacancies increasing or decreasing as the next 12 months pass?

Peter Lovell

"As more markets are discovered and exploited we will see more and more vacancies to match the demand, especially in the online sector with the proliferation of MMOs and social gaming."

Andy Campbell

"There is no doubt that 2009 was a flat year. However we are seeing steady growth with most of our clients. It's still too early to predict whether this progression will continue or taper off, but signs are moderately cautious. Hopefully with increasing confidence at client and candidate level, the market liquidity should return in time."

Stig Strand

"Amiqus has seen a 40 per cent increase in mid level to senior development requirements compared to February 2009. Whilst management roles do not seem to have picked up as much as development staff, there are a healthy number of studios recruiting in 2010 compared to this time last year."

Kim Adcock

"Increasing. For OPM our jobs have gone up by 63 per cent since July 2009. I've never witnessed such a recovery, most of which has occurred since November. OPM will be hiring more consultants this year as UK business increases, also focusing on European markets, and two new service offerings."

Tony Beckwith

"I'd expect publishers and developers to take on a bunch more staff over the next few years and re-build their bases post-recession. There will be a lot of new jobs created because of the new digital delivery mechanisms and because of the huge explosion in connected devices that is happening now and for many years to come."

Are there particular roles where there is a scarcity or abundance of viable candidates at the moment? If so, why do you think this is the case?

Peter Leonard, principal games consultant, Amiqus

"The most sought after discipline within the games industry is still for experienced programmers, especially those that have focused on specific areas of technology such as graphics, audio and network. The main reason that demand far outstrips supply is simply down to the numbers of available candidates with these extremely technical and niche skillsets."

Tony Beckwith

"For us it would probably be artists with a technical slant. This is a fairly new specialisation to the industry. But really – take a look at the job titles in the credits of Pixar movies over the years. With each new movie you see more and more specialist roles. That's how the games industry is going."

Kim Adcock

"Producers, project managers, audio and games designers roles are on the increase – they were the first to reduce and are the first to recover. In development there is a shortage of network and graphics programmers, senior technical animators, technical VFX and UI artists, triple-A games and level designers."

Andy Campbell

"The growth of online gaming and service models has created a growing demand for technical skills which are in limited supply, particularly at the highest level with strategic responsibility. Examples include network engineers and server developers. This will often mean recruiting talent from outside the games industry while ensuring they can work effectively in a gaming environment."

Peter Lovell

"Given the importance of the role, we always take time to fill our core technological roles. We have also found it difficult to find and attract candidates with experience of microtransactions as a payment system."

What piece of advice would you give those now preparing to apply for a new job in the industry?

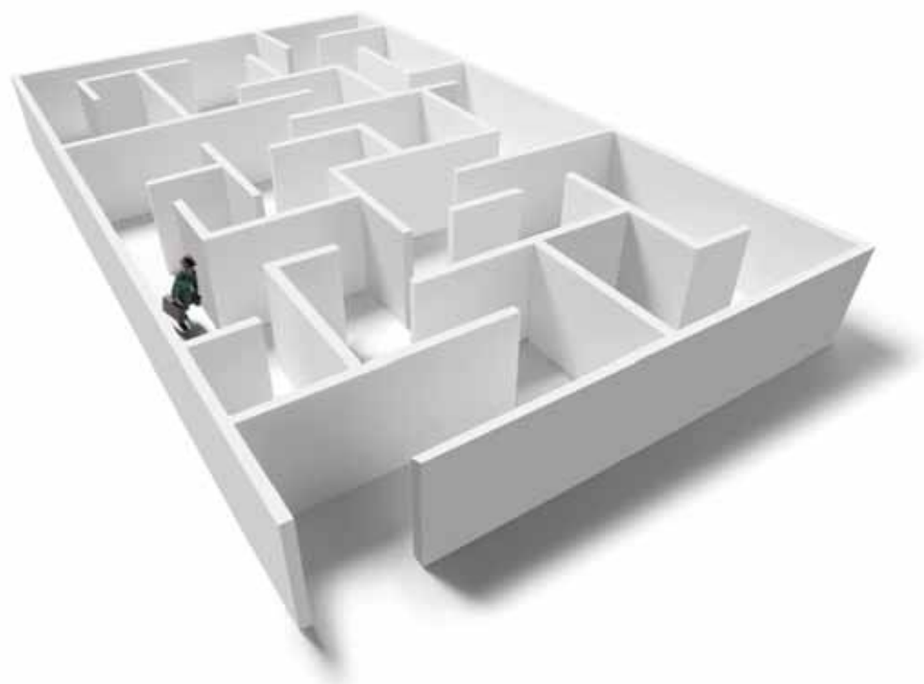
Peter Lovell
"In general, our advice would differ from no other field, and that would be to do your research, know as much about the role and the company as possible. Prepare yourself and practice your interview technique to build confidence. Most importantly though, be patient. It may take multiple applications before you get your first interview, don't take it to heart or send a nasty email to the company; instead keep your chin up and start again – Rome wasn't built in a day."

Andy Campbell
"To secure a role, candidates need to ensure all aspects of their application are carefully targeted at the specific role – passion for the role, detailed research of the potential employer and a deep understanding of the unique benefits only you can deliver to the business are critical."

Kim Adcock
"Bear in mind that due to smaller HR teams they have less time to assess your application – so make an impact. A concise, professional CV and an introductory letter for each job you're applying for detailing your strengths in relation to that role always helps. Research the company and let them know why you want to work for them. For technical and creative roles a demo is essential. Many companies will not even assess your application without it regardless of your years in games and the products on your CV. Ideally include softography, shot list and software used. Never assume the person reading your CV knows the games you've worked on."

Peter Leonard
"Education in this field is always good, but regardless of whether you are studying a qualification related to game development or not, many studios will judge you on your final show reel. It is imperative therefore that all applicants invest in one, and greatly so. It is also very important that whatever your field be sure to compare yourself against some of the recently released titles."

Tony Beckwith
"If you're not passionate about gaming then don't bother applying."



WHO'S WHO?

Kim Adcock
Managing Director
OPM Response
As managing director of OPM response, Adcock heads up one of the most prominent job-finding companies in the field. Established in 1998, OPM boasts an impressive roster of clients, and has won two Develop Industry Excellence Awards.

Tony Beckwith
Vice President and General Manager
Black Rock Studio
Part of Disney Interactive Studios, Brighton-based driving game specialist Black Rock started life as Climax Racing. In his role Beckwith has hands on experience with much of the company's recruitment.

Andy Cambell
CEO
Specialmove
Campbell leads a recruitment team who have all previously worked in the games industry. His firm specialise in providing developers and management staff to an enormous range of companies throughout the sector.

Peter Lovell
Recruitment Advisor
Jagex
The Cambridge studio behind *RuneScape* currently employs a workforce of over 400, and is renowned for its high staff retention levels. As Jagex's recruitment advisor, Peter Lovell knows a great deal about the jobs market.

Peter Leonard
Principal Games Consultant
Amiqus
Offering 'people resourcing' across multiple industries, Amiqus has a wealth experience in the development sector. Established back in 1986, the consultancy is currently broadening its technological remit.

Stig Strand
Head of Games Recruitment Team
Amiqus
A colleague of Leonard at Amiqus, Strand heads up the recruiter's games team, giving him a highly specialised perspective and in-depth knowledge of current trends across the development industry.

We understand. You're passionate about gaming. You see things other people don't see. Everywhere you look, you see opportunity. We get it. Because as recruiters specialising in the video games industry, gaming is our passion too.
We have the best gaming jobs waiting for you right now. We help a host of big name developers and publishers to secure the biggest talents for their teams – all the way to the top, for everything from creatives to HR to finance.
So no matter what stage you're at in your career or what your discipline is, why not talk to us about where we can take you next? Email us at games.team@amiqus.com or visit amiqus.com/games
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Gaming. It gets to you.

Are You Getting Enough?

Last month, *Develop* invited games industry professionals from around the world to take part in an extensive salary and career survey. Over 400 people, from all sectors of interactive entertainment, took part. Here, **Michael French** offers up highlights and data from the results…

AVERAGE ANNUAL GAMES DEVELOPMENT SALARY

£31,964

Unlike last year, where the games development average was slightly lower than the industry average (which includes jobs at retail and publishing) the above number is higher – our data shows the average global games salary for the entire field is £31,509.

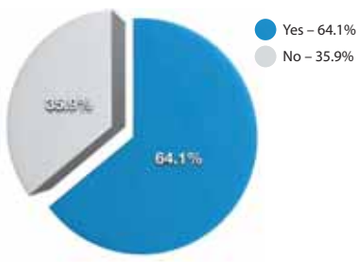
Sure, it's only a few hundred quid higher – but the number shows a return to the number we'd reported in 2008 of £31,655, suggesting 2009's wage dips were caused by the credit crunch. This new higher average could suggest recovery has come quicker than many thought it would.

This number takes into account developers globally. Over 300 of our sample held development jobs in the UK, various mainland Europe countries (especially France and Germany), USA, Canada and Australia. We've gone for a median average of the data rather than a mean average – the latter would include the handful of very senior execs who kindly took part as well. Factoring those high flyers back into the equation the average then rises a sizeable amount to £39,069.

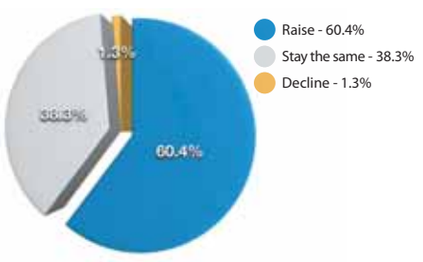
We've also factored out the average salaries for each discipline and region of the UK over the page.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

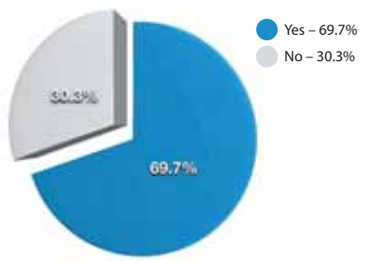
Are you satisfied that your salary covers your cost of living?



In the next 12 months do you expect your salary to…

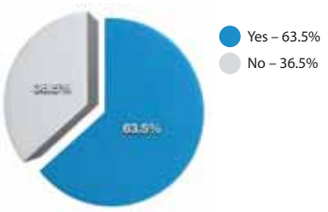


With regard your current work situation, are you feeling confident about 2010?

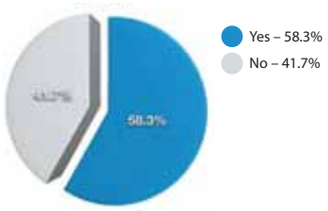


BENEFITS AND BONUSES

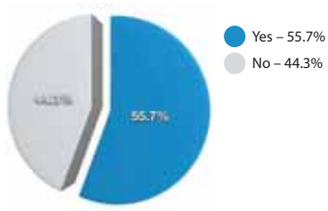
Do you receive additional benefits over and above your basic salary?



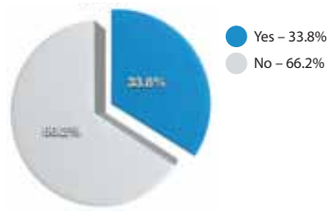
Does your employer contribute to your pension?



Does your employer provide any other benefits?

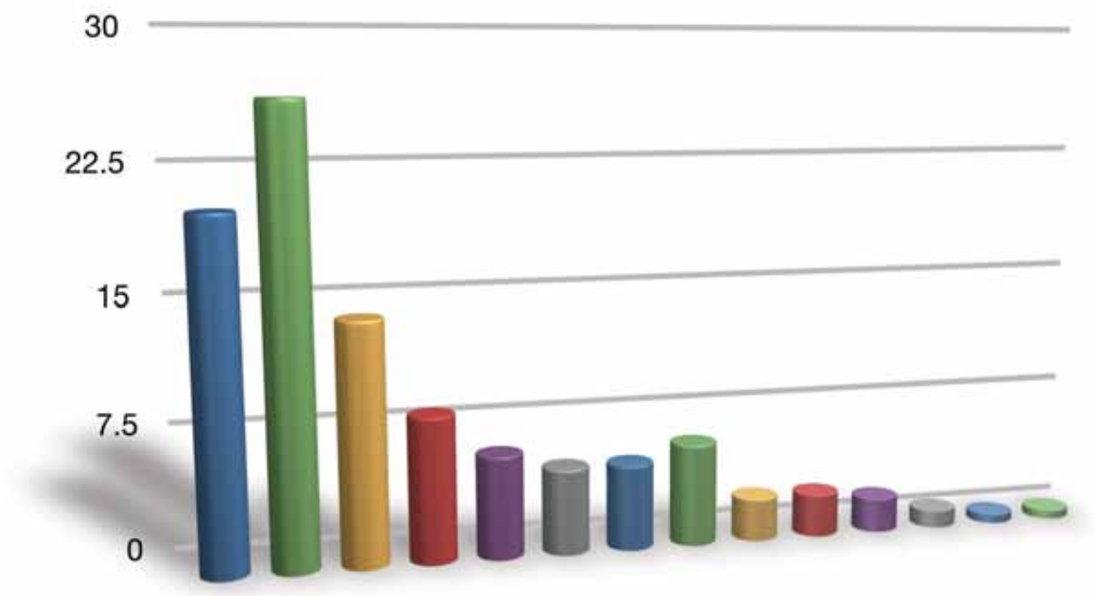


Does your employer provide any extra training?



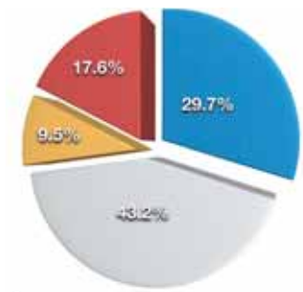
MOVING JOBS

If you are considering a change of job in future, what is the main reason?



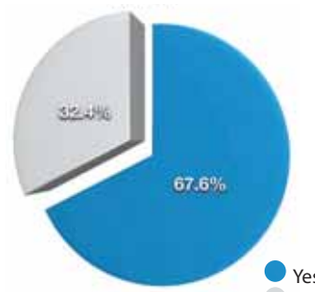
- Financial remuneration - 20.1%
- New challenge - 26.1%
- Limited opportunities at current company - 14.1%
- Chance to move abroad - 8.5%
- Location change - in the same country - 6.0%
- Job status - 5.0%
- Promotion - 5.0%
- Desire for broader experience - 6.0%
- New skills - 2.5%
- Increased responsibility - 2.5%
- More management opportunities - 2.0%
- Industry/sector - 1.0%
- Less management opportunities - 0.5%
- Decreased responsibility - 0.5%

When are you most likely to change jobs?



- This year, 2010 – 29.7%
- In the next two to three years – 43.2%
- In five years' time - 9.5%
- None of these - 17.6%

Are you attracted by the opportunity to work overseas?



- Yes – 67.6%
- No – 32.4%

The cream always rises to the top...

FULLFAT

Full Fat Productions, based in Coventry, have developed over 40 titles on a variety of platforms since their foundation in 1996. They are currently undergoing an exciting period of growth, and require experienced candidates to work on Nintendo DS & Wii titles.

Full Fat work with leading international games publishers including EA, 2K and Sega, developing titles such as The Sims 2. These relationships will allow you to work on a variety of exciting projects.

As part of a small, cross-discipline team you will have the opportunity to have genuine input into the look and feel of the project and truly utilise your creativity.

They offer excellent salaries and additional benefits such as an on-site gym, regular staff social events and flexible working hours.

Artists **£ competitive + benefits**

As an Artist at Full Fat you are responsible for driving the look and feel of a project, giving you the opportunity to create environments, props, vehicles and characters when required. The successful candidate will have; a portfolio that can demonstrate an all-round ability, games industry experience and be capable of mentoring junior members of the team where necessary. This is a 3DS Max studio, but Maya experience will be considered for the right candidate. Positions are available at a variety of levels, from Artist to Lead Artist.

Animators **£ competitive + benefits**

As Animator you will make your project come to life, driving the animation for a project. You should have games industry experience and be capable of creating key-frame animations in a variety of styles. You will be required to animate using 3DS Max, though Maya experience will be considered for the right candidate. Positions are available at a variety of levels from Animator to Lead Animator.

For more details please contact: dan@aswift.com

Think you know somebody who would be interested? Refer a friend and receive £250 if successfully placed.

For more detailed job specs please contact our dedicated consultants via phone or email in the strictest of confidence

Web www.aswift.com Tel +44 (0)1709 876 877

AardvarkSwift

WHO EARNS WHAT?

CODING

Average Yearly Salaries:

- Lead Programmer – £40,000
  (but can rise to £51,000 depending on seniority/experience)
- Programmer – £31,455
- Junior Programmer – £21,000

ART

Average Yearly Salaries:

- Lead Artist – $41,125
- Artist - £30,441

DESIGN

Average Yearly Salaries:

- Lead Designer – £37,500
- Designer – £28,281
- Junior Designer – £22,500

PRODUCTION

Average Yearly Salaries:

- Lead Producer *(Internal)* – £44,000
- Producer *(Internal)* – £31,500
- Producer *(External/Publishing)* – £29,166
  (but rises to £39,375 depending on publisher size)

AUDIO

Average Yearly Salaries:

- Lead Audio Roles – £46,750
  (can rise as high as £60,000 dependent on experience/studio size)
- Junior Audio Roles – £27,000

QA & LOCALISATION

Average Yearly Salaries:

- Junior QA role – £15,000
- Lead QA role - £19,500

SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Average Yearly Salaries:

- COO / CTO / Creative Director - £60,313
- Studio Head & MD/CEO - £68,750
  (rising to £76.923 depending on experience/seniority/studio size and location, etc.)

REGIONAL BREAKDOWN

South West Average Yearly Games Development Salary: £31,750

South East Average Yearly Games Development Salary: £32,692

East England Average Yearly Games Development Salary: £30,833

East Midlands Average Yearly Games Development Salary: £29,305

West Midlands Average Yearly Games Development Salary: £24,852

Yorkshire & Humberside Average Yearly Games Development Salary: £27,000

North West Average Yearly Games Development Salary: £33,125

North East Average Yearly Games Development Salary: £34,445

Scotland Average Yearly Games Development Salary: £25,000

London Average Yearly Games Development Salary: £33,681

Note: Results calculated from answers supplied by 270 UK games developers. Median average used to calculate answers, thus automatically discounting salaries from studio heads and similar selective highly-paid roles which would otherwise distort the data.

opm recruitment
programming
dev management
test and translate
commercial
creative

Jobs of the month

Console Games Audio Designer, London/South East - Ref 11733

UK leading AAA producing studio currently looking for an Audio Designer. Experience in games and shipped titles are essential.

Senior Games Designer - AAA Studio, North-East - Ref 11482

Our client have a great working atmosphere, close knit teams and strike a happy balance between hard work and equally hard play.

Senior Producer - Action Project, London - Ref 11083

Reporting directly to the Head of Production, you will be supervising a 70 strong development team working on a PS3 / XBox 360 action title.

Art Director - Fantastic AAA Project, Poland - Ref 11067

Operating a cutting edge development studio in Poland, our client is responsible for one of the most widely used game engines in the industry.

Experienced Software Engineers, London - Ref 11724

Having completed multiple projects, our client continues its mission to guarantee the highest quality products, delivered on time and to budget.

Senior Games Animator - Cross-Platform, Midlands - Ref 11722

Our client was established in 1996 and is a fast-growing, experienced and respected independent games developer.

develop Winner 2006 develop WINNER 2008

we've got a lot to offer

With 18 years games recruitment experience, specialist skill based consultants, unquestionable reputation for excellent service, and a worldwide candidate base with thousands of industry experienced professionals, we are the company you need to talk to when looking for new staff for your projects in 2010.

OPM Response Ltd
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www.opmjobs.com

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The choice of the experienced games industry professional.

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Mind the skills gap!

To find out what the industry really thinks about education and recruitment, **Develop** has teamed with **Train2Game** for an incisive survey and we'd like your help. Please tick the relevant answers and send back your responses

In recent years the relevant skills needed to enter the games industry have become a talking point. Do our entry-level staff have the abilities required to support our ever-changing, multi-billion pound industry? Which are the skills most valued by employers and what are the criteria upon which prospective employees are judged? Plus, with a general election on the horizon, is the government doing enough to support the continued growth of the industry?

SEND IN YOUR ANSWERS

There are two ways to send in your feedback to the Train2Game/Develop industry survey.

Either fill in these pages, detach them from the rest of the magazine and post them to: Train2Game/Develop Survey, Intent Media, Saxon House, 6a St Andrew Street, Hertford SG14 1JA

Alternatively, head online to www.develop-online.net and click 'Train2Game/Develop Survey' in the top left to fill in the survey online.

ABOUT TRAIN2GAME

Train2Game offers open learning courses to people who would like a career in the video games industry. Training with Train2Game's open learning courses gives its students, who are passionate about gaming, relevant industry skills for a career in games design, animation, programming and other related industries.

Train2Game is part of the UK's most successful open learning company, Metropolitan International Schools, and their courses are recognised by the UK video games trade association, TIGA, who are the independent awarding and examination body.

For more information check out www.train2game.com or call 0845 272 8795.

Salary and progression

What is a fair average starting salary for an entry-level position in games programming?

- ❑ Less than £18,000
- ❑ £18,001 to £20,000
- ❑ £20,001 to £23,000
- ❑ £23,001 to £28,000
- ❑ Over £28,000

What is a fair average starting salary for an entry-level position in games design?

- ❑ Less than £16,000
- ❑ £16,001 to £19,000
- ❑ £19,001 to £22,000
- ❑ £22,001 to £25,000
- ❑ Over £25,000

What is a fair starting salary for an entry-level position in games animation?

- ❑ Less than £16,000
- ❑ £16,001 to £19,000
- ❑ £19,001 to £22,000
- ❑ £22,001 to £25,000
- ❑ Over £25,000

Once joining a developer at an entry-level position, how long on average do you think it should take someone to progress to the next level within the company?

- ❑ 6 months
- ❑ 7 months to 11 months
- ❑ 12 months to 18 months
- ❑ Over 18 months

Skills

What are the barriers to entry for a career in making computer games?

- ❑ Not enough experience
- ❑ Not enough expertise in the software used at a studio
- ❑ Degree achieved not relevant
- ❑ Qualifications achieved not enough
- ❑ Other, please specify:

Do you think there is a skills shortage in the industry?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

On average how much time does your company spend training entry-level staff on basic industry software packages like C++?

- ❑ A day
- ❑ Up to a month
- ❑ Two to six months
- ❑ Seven months to a year
- ❑ Ongoing/Over a year

What are the most valuable skills developers look for in new entry-level staff?

- ❑ Team player
- ❑ Attention to detail
- ❑ Highly organised
- ❑ Good interpersonal skills
- ❑ Creativity
- ❑ Other, please specify:

What are the most important academic skills or qualifications to have to become a:

- ❑ Games artist?
- ❑ Games designer?
- ❑ Games programmer?

Please state whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

"I would rather hire a student from a games-focused course than a general purpose one."

- ❑ Agree strongly
- ❑ Agree somewhat
- ❑ No opinion either way
- ❑ Disagree somewhat
- ❑ Disagree strongly

"I think that developers need to be more involved in helping ensure games students have the relevant skills for the industry."

- ❑ Agree strongly
- ❑ Agree somewhat
- ❑ No opinion either way
- ❑ Disagree somewhat
- ❑ Disagree strongly

"Formal qualifications are vital to whether I will hire someone or not."

- ❑ Agree strongly
- ❑ Agree somewhat
- ❑ No opinion either way
- ❑ Disagree somewhat
- ❑ Disagree strongly

Which specific software packages would you recommend learning to become a:

❑ Games programmer?

❑ Games artist?

❑ Games designer?

For people who want to get into the games industry, where is the best place to go to find out more information?

❑ TIGA
❑ Games specialist media
❑ Trade shows
❑ Open days
❑ Developers
❑ Publishers
❑ Other - please specify

Work experience

How many entry-level staff do you hire per year (i.e. people straight from education with no prior work experience)?

❑ 0 to 2
❑ 3 to 5
❑ 6 to 10
❑ 11 or more

Do you offer internships or work experience programmes to students? If no, would you consider it?

How useful are internships or work experience for students when being considered for a role in the games industry?

❑ Very useful
❑ Moderately useful
❑ Not useful
❑ No idea

Current educational courses

Do you think existing games development and design courses meet industry needs?

❑ Yes
❑ No

How do you think existing games development and design courses could be improved?

In your opinion, which educational courses teach relevant games skills to work in the industry?

Do you consult with relevant educational establishments to help shape their course?

❑ Yes. Please specify which ones below
❑ No. Please specify why not below

Your staff

What percentage of your development staff are educated to degree level?

❑ 0 to 20%
❑ 21% to 40%
❑ 41% to 60%
❑ 61% to 80%
❑ Over 80%

What percentage of the staff you hire have a specific degree in a games discipline (e.g. BSc Games Animation Design, etc.)?

❑ 0 to 20%
❑ 21% to 40%
❑ 41% to 60%
❑ 61% to 80%
❑ Over 80%

What percentage of the staff you hire have more general degrees, not specific to gaming (e.g. general Computer Science, general Art etc.)?

❑ 0 to 20%
❑ 21% to 40%
❑ 41% to 60%
❑ 61% to 80%
❑ Over 80%

What percentage of your staff are UK residents?

❑ 0 to 20%
❑ 21% to 40%
❑ 41% to 60%
❑ 61% to 80%
❑ Over 80%

General industry questions

In you opinion, which is the most desirable development team to work for?

Who do you think is the most inspirational person in the games industry and why?

What is your favourite game of all time in terms of design?

What support would you like to see the British Government give the games industry?

❑ Tax breaks
❑ Help with enhancing education and skills for the industry
❑ Other, please specify

With the next general election approaching, if a new government could do one thing for gaming, what should it be?

About you

What is your job title?

What qualifications do you have?

❑ Games-specific degree (e.g. BA Games Design & Technology)
❑ Degree (not specific to games directly (e.g. Computer Science BSc)
❑ Training offered internally at my studio
❑ None/self-taught
❑ Other educational course/qualification
Please specify:

Thanks for your time!

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THE SUNDAY TIMES 100 BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR 2008
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WINNER GOLDEN JOYSTICK AWARDS

Dare to Dream

One of the best ways for graduates to get into games is through the Dare to be Digital competition. Here, project manager **Elaine Russell** discusses how it helps train people for joining the industry…

These days, there's no such thing as a guaranteed career path, even in a relatively buoyant industry like computer games development. Even though the market is weathering the recession rather better than some other sectors, getting your foot on the first rung of the career ladder requires talent, determination and luck, especially when so many other people have their eyes set on the same goal.

Fortunately, there is a way in which aspiring young games developers can massively improve the odds in their favour, and it's a well-trodden route that enjoys widespread approval among employers across the games industry.

Dare to be Digital, promoted and organised by the University of Abertay Dundee, has been the premier games design competition for students for more than ten years. It is unique in providing contestants with an experience as close to real life commercial games development as is possible without actually working in the industry.

Indeed, for most young developers who have undergone the experience, just having Dare to be Digital on their CV is often enough to get their job application moved right to the top of the pile.

"There's no doubt that participating in Dare provides students with invaluable insights into how the industry works," says Brian Lawson from Realtime Worlds. "It provides prospective employers with a level of comfort that these students are coming into the industry with a more realistic outlook than their counterparts, who are coming fresh out of university and into a real development environment for the first time."

Dare to be Digital pits teams of talented students and graduates from universities and art colleges around the world against each other in a race to produce a fully-functioning prototype game in just ten weeks. As if this games development 'hot-house' atmosphere wasn't enough pressure, the game then has to face a public vote and be judged by industry experts.

Left: Some previous Dare to be Digital team productions

> ***"For mentors, Dare is a real shot in the arm to be exposed to the ideas and idealism that comes from students who are bringing a fresh perspective."***
>
> Brian Lawson, Realtime Worlds

It's the teamwork aspect that many studios see as being valuable experience for would-be employees, says Blitz Games Studios' Aaron Miller: "Dare To Be Digital provides students with experience of perhaps the most important aspect of being in the games industry: working as part of a collaborative team who are striving towards a common goal, learning to look critically at your own work, understanding how it fits into the schedule and the project as a whole are key to the success of the project.

"Students also learn that the game design as originally conceived on paper is rarely the game that they present at the end of the competition," he adds. "The process of understanding when to remove game features that there is not time to fully realise them is also a crucial learning experience."

This is a key reason why increasing numbers of games development companies are actively supporting Dare to be Digital by signing up to the competition's Developer Accord. The Accord involves them in selecting the teams at the start of Dare to be Digital and providing mentors to support and advise teams during the competition. As well as Realtime Worlds, Blitz and Rare, last year's Developer Accord also included the BBC, Cohort Studios, Denki, Ninja Theory, Rockstar North, Sega and Sony.

It's not only a worthwhile experience for the students but also for those who choose to be mentors too, explains Lawson: "For mentors it's a real shot in the arm to be exposed to the ideas and idealism that come from students who are bringing a fresh, untainted perspective to the whole game development process."

Dare to be Digital will be running again in 2010, and will be inviting applications from teams this month. At the same time, the competition organisers are busy recruiting companies to join the 2010 Dare Developer Accord and take part in selecting and mentoring this year's crop of new talent. The selection of teams will take place at the end of March and the beginning of April, and the contest itself runs from early June until the middle of August.

I am confident that this year's Developer Accord will once again attract the best from across the UK's development community. Of course, there are talent recruitment benefits associated with participating in the Developer Accord, but I know that the staff development opportunities for their own employees involved in selection and mentoring and the pure altruism supporting the growth of young talent are equally important factors. We're really looking forward to working with the developers again this year.

www.daretoebdigital.com

Star Trek

Develop has teamed up with Aardvark Swift to launch a competition designed to find the UK's brightest graduate – but what exactly is involved? **Ed Fear** caught up with programme manager Hollie Heraghty to find out more…

Above: Hollie Heraghty, consultant at Aardvark Swift and Search for a Star programme manager

First of all, what is Search for a Star, and what does it hope to achieve as a competition?
Search for a Star is an *X Factor*-style talent competition we're running in conjunction with UK universities, *Develop* magazine and the UK games development industry. It's designed to highlight and reward the UK's most promising video games programmers. Through three different stages, students will be tested and be asked to demonstrate that they have the skills, passion and the technical knowledge that the games industry is crying out for.

It will ultimately help provide opportunities for talented graduate programmers to get into the games industry, through experience, exposure and winning a Develop Award. We're hoping that Search For a Star helps to plug the skills gap and will provide great talent for UK games studios.

How many students and universities have you got taking part?
We've approached approximately 50 UK universities, and a large percentage of those are taking part. The numbers of students vary from uni to uni – some feel they have two or three excellent candidates, others have nominated the full maximum of 10.

What has feedback been like from Universities so far?
The feedback from universities has been very positive. We have excellent relationships in place with many through our previous work delivering our annual careers talks. Many of the them also agree that there is a place for a competition like this. The focus is on the individual, as apposed to a team effort. The programming elements are completely technical and it shouldn't clash with their studies.

The universities want the industry to let them know exactly what technical skills are required. They can see that this can be gained through the feedback that will be given to them; they'll be able to see what is good about their courses and which areas they could develop and improve. They agree that as well as providing opportunities for their graduates, Search for a Star will help provide a valuable link between UK games developers and academic institutions. This should help universities focus future course content, which will in turn help to produce graduates with the skills and knowledge required to begin a career in the video games industry.

Have you spoken to any studios about it? Do they see it as a worthwhile competition?
In general yes. We've had an excellent response from forward thinking studios, as well as support from Skillset. However we find that developers fall into two camps: those that want to help to improve the calibre of graduates and those that just want to moan about it. Many studios are open to the idea of graduates, but feel that they are lacking the skills or the hobbyist projects or demos that they would require to consider them.

> ***"As well as providing opportunities for graduates, Search for a Star will provide a link between UK games developers and educators, which should help focus future course content."***

The response from Relentless Software has been amazing. I spoke with them because I was aware how actively they recruit graduates and felt that working together would give a greater credibility to the competition. Relentless devised and will mark the first and second stages of the competition. Sarah Maynard and Lizi Attwood have been a great help and support and have backed the competition with a lot of enthusiasm. Their help has really been invaluable, and their response cemented our belief that it's a worthwhile competition.

What is the aim of the first round of technical questions?
The first round is designed to mimic the technical interview that a graduate would face after applying for a job at a studio. There are ten technical questions.

Students complete these under exam conditions so we're confident that the answers are the students own. The last question allows scope for the students to shine (*see boxout*), to demonstrate the standard that we are looking for.

What comes after that?
The next stage of the competition is a second technical round. The remaining students will be given a task-based question, which will allow them to get to grips with some code, do some debugging and implement relevant changes.

Those students who are successful in this stage will be invited to a panel interview, then the winning student will then be invited to the Develop Awards to collect their Search for a Star award.

How many people do you expect to put forward for the panel interview?
This will depend a little on the calibre and quantity that make the cut from previous rounds – but we estimate six people.

What sorts of people do you anticipate being part of the interview panel?
The panel will contain a mixture of judges: a representative from recruitment, one from a technical background and hopefully a senior figure or two from the development industry. We will be talking to the students about their technical answers, going through their CV and assessing their passion and enthusiasm for games.

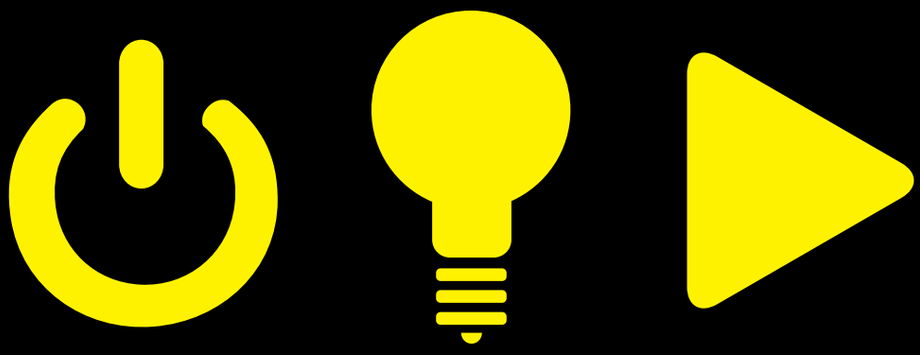
SAMPLE QUESTION

The following is the last question administered to entrants in the first round of technical questions, designed to allow an creative answer:

*Write the API and the **World::Update** method for a game system where the world has a player and enemies and the player has a position and an array of bullets with positions (each of which the world tests against the position of the enemies) and a score that is updated as enemies are removed.*

We are expecting the class definitions only for all classes, except for World class, where we expect the Update function only to be defined.

The games industry is changing. Come and change it with us.



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IGDA Quality of Life Survey

The IGDA is on the brink of releasing its biggest survey into global quality of life issues, and **Ed Fear** has a sneak peek at some early results…

With the Rockstar Wives 'scandal' currently the talk of the game development industry, the thorny issue of Quality of Life in the game development industry has once again raised its ugly head.

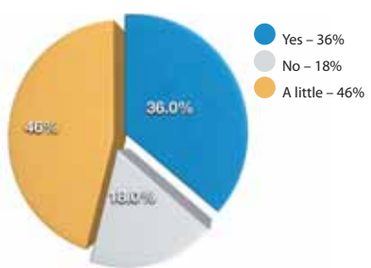
Regardless of whether or not the claims of these assembled San Diego spouses are correct, it's incidents such as this – and the original EA Spouse that first brought the issue into public consciousness back in 2004 – that highlight the practices going on behind closed doors at studios. But it also highlights the widespread belief that this is how things have to be in such a creative industry, where those extra hours at the end of a project can make the difference between an average game and a great one.

The IGDA's new Quality of Life Special Interest Group has been set up specifically to educate and inform both staff and management as to their rights and responsibilities, and to promote healthy working environments. Although still in its early stages, the group has kicked off its efforts with a wide-ranging survey to gauge the current state of quality of life for game development industry workers.

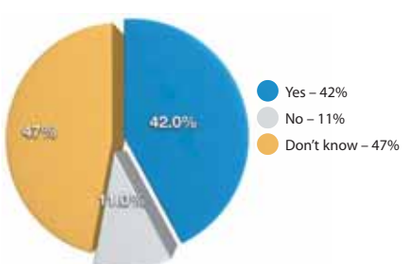
Although the group aims to present its findings at GDC next month, *Develop* has been granted an exclusive sneak peak at early results. We've focused on the thorny issue of unions, which often goes hand in hand with discussions on working conditions, to see how those surveyed by the organisation felt about the issue.

THE RESULTS

Do you know the labour laws where you live? *2,506 responded*



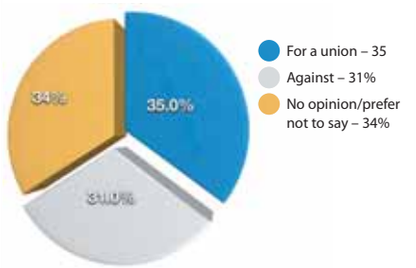
Do you feel the labour laws where you live offer sufficient protection should a grievance arise between an employer and employee? *2,159 responded*



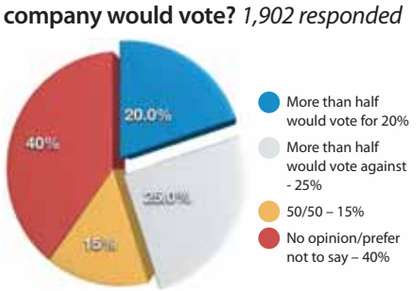
One of the IGDA Quality of Life SIG's goals is to empower games industry workers to know their rights, so they can know whether they are being unfairly exploited or not. These results show that a third are confident in their knowledge of their rights, but almost half are unsure whether those laws could actually be of use to them in the event of a grievance procedure – and one in ten felt they would be no help at all.

Some developers believe the only way to improve the quality of life in the industry is to unionise. If a vote were held today:

How would you vote? *2,506 responded*



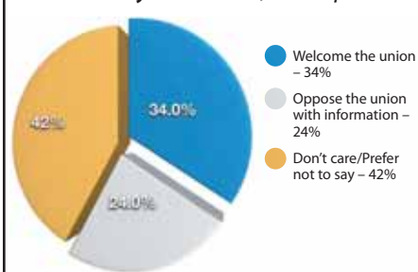
How do you think the people at your company would vote? *1,902 responded*



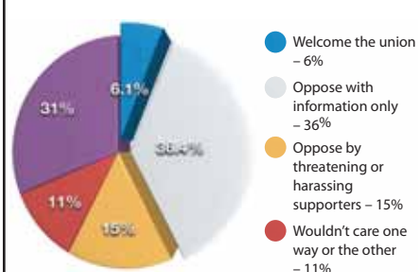
What's interesting here is the almost completely even split between those for, against or ambivalent towards unionisation – a similar split was also featured in our own global Quality of Life survey last year. While it's more common to hear games industry mouthpieces claiming that the concept of unionisation doesn't fit with such a creative industry, it's worth nothing that a third of the workforce is actually concretely in favour of it. Whether or not any union will be able to gain the critical mass of support necessary to unionise the industry in the face of such split opinion is another matter, however.

If a group of employees tried to start a union at your company:

How would you react? *1,607 responded*



How would management react? *1,607 responded*



It's not a huge surprise that the views here are as evenly split as in the previous questions. It is surprising, however, that six per cent of people think that their company would react favourably to unions, if only because it's hard to find anyone in a position of authority agreeing with the concept. That half think their employers would oppose it is little shock, but that 15 per cent think they would result to threats or harrassment is indicative of how people view their higher-ups.

New Recruits

Looking for a new job? Industry veteran and frequent interviewer **Trevor Williams** runs through some advice for getting that dream position…

■ It sounds obvious, but ensure that your CV is 99 per cent up to date. An out of date CV is likely to be missing some of the your most relevant work and experience – i.e. the most recent – and it will sound strange if you reference work that you've not written down.

■ On saying that, while it's important to cover all of your work, it's similarly important to keep your CV down to a maximum of two pages. If the first page does not grab a reviewer, then it will likely be 'filed' in the bin. Don't be afraid of making it a little different to get yourself remembered.

■ If you do not have industry experience, you must tailor your CV to show why a games company should consider you. Make sure you include your gaming experience and any gaming-specific skills. Don't be embarrassed about this – your resume should major on these.

■ If you see that a studio has placed an ad within *Develop* or *MCV* highlighting a vacancy, *then apply directly to that studio*. Apply without using your agency, because this will push your application to the front of the queue. After all, the studio does not want to pay for an ad, and then pay an agency on top of that.

■ Try to find out what the studio has done in the past, what it is currently working on and what sort of culture they promote. If they are developing products that do not fit with your skill sets, or games which do not interest you, you may need to think twice before applying to them – or if you do still want to apply, you'll need a persuasive argument as to why you'd want to work at that company.

ONCE YOU'VE GOT YOUR INTERVIEW

■ Make sure that you arrive to the interview 15 minutes before your appointment. Ask for details on how to get to the studio well in advance. Where is the train station? Is there a taxi rank near? This sounds really obvious, but too many people turn up to interviews late. Phoning to say you will be late does not make it okay!

■ Find out as much background information on the studio as you can. An informed and aware candidate impresses much more than one who knows little or nothing.

■ Find out the name of the person who will be interviewing you. Rest assured, he will know yours.

■ No need to turn up suited and booted to an interview at a studio – after all, this is the game development business, and therefore structured but creative. But do turn out smart, casual and clean – it demonstrates respect for the company you are visiting.

■ And last but certainly not least, never bad mouth anyone in the video games industry. Ever. Believe me, the industry is far, far too small. Be clear about why you left, or why you want to leave your last employer. That's one of the most important questions an interviewer wants a clear and pragmatic answer to.

Trevor Williams is the co-founder and a director of Playground Games, based in Leamington Spa, in the United Kingdom. Playground is a new development group focusing on pioneering development models, and is currently recruiting. Trevor has held leadership positions at Elite, Rage, Swordfish and Codemasters and has been interviewing potential staff for the last 20 years.

Having an interview is nerve-wracking and unpredictable, but there are certain basic rules to follow to ensure maximum impact

QOL in Singapore

How does quality of life differ in a country finding its way in games development? Imperial College's **Dr. Patrick Stacey** presents his discoveries from a four year investigation…

Singapore is one of the fastest growing hubs in the world for game development. Some of the biggest names in the industry such as Lucasfilm and Koei have established fully-fledged game studios there.

Beyond these arch angels of game development are the lesser-spotted indie angels trying to eke out a living. Many of them have been around in Singapore longer than the likes of Koei Singapore. Over the last four year I have studied them to understand the Quality of life (QOL) challenges they were facing. I conducted 60 interviews with developers in nine studios, as well as with industry regulators, had dozens of informal conversations outside office hours with them, and spent months observing their work practices between 2004 and 2007. To put the scale of the data collected into perspective, this resulted in 1664 A4 pages of discussions.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This massive data set condensed down into a number of essential, repeating forces of Quality of Life.

Most of the forces are negative, but there are some positives. In summary, interdisciplinary tension, design ambiguity and staff turnover triggered negative QOL, whereas greater tool use, resource awareness, and the ability to improvise triggered positive QOL. Therefore, the QOL in this study is particularly related to work practices and interdisciplinary relations, as opposed to, say, issues relating to pay. As well as eliciting issues that game developers had with regards to their QOL – as other studies have done – the study further revealed the generative forces of QOL.

As you may recall, in April 2009 *Develop* published its own survey of QOL. It revealed issues particularly relating to hours and pay, and that QOL seemed to be improving slightly. To take this further, what are the dynamics of rich and poor QOL? What are the burning social, technical and political issues that are bubbling beneath the surface? Before these are revealed, let's put the data into perspective.

BACKGROUND

Why should we pay any attention to indie studios in Singapore? Until the late 1990s Singaporean professionals were largely engaged in technological innovation, engineering and applied R&D with little tradition in the arts as an enterprise. Yet, it was recognised that more artistic enterprises needed to be nurtured to stimulate techno-preneurship. In Singapore, it was encouraged for the arts to blend with engineering in the form of computer game development. This was admirably spearheaded by the Media Development Authority (MDA) and the Infocomm Development Authority (IDA) in the early 2000s. As we will see, brazen conflicts between technologists and artists were ripe sources of poor QOL.

> ***"This study raises the issue that we need to manage the more micro day-to-day social, technical and political forces that act on development efforts."***

QOL: THE BIGGER PICTURE

Why are we still talking about QOL anyway? Beyond its intrinsic importance, it is also arguably directly related to the quality of the games we produce. I'm thinking here of the extensive research done by Amabile et al (2005) and McGrath (2006); being 'well' psychologically is fundamental to being creative. Further, the creative industries are now comparable in size to the UK's financial services sector – it contributes over eight per cent to the economy, and employs 1.8 million people. There's a strong case for game studio employers to take QOL very seriously.

SOME QOL THEORY FOR SEASONING

There has already been a great deal of research on QOL outside of games, in settings like developing countries, health, and youth development. A lot of this research boils down into a broth in which a sense of community and belonging is critical to psychological wellbeing, or QOL.

While this can be interpreted in many ways, ask yourself this question: when you're at work, do you feel that team spirit, that *esprit de corps*? Do all the participants 'get' each other? On a scale of one to ten, how well do you think you understand the needs of your level designer, your animator, your programmer? Sometimes you will, sometimes you won't.

And then, there will always be unexpected challenges around the corner when everything suddenly falls apart and QOL smashes on the hard floor of business.

Indeed, QOL is probably akin to a wave – it's an unstable concept with peaks and troughs; a process not a state. So, perhaps we should think in terms of dealing with QOL as a process on a day-to-day basis.

EXAMPLES FROM THE STUDY

Given the enormity of the Singapore data and the tight corset of cutting-edge journalism, only representative episodes (*refer to table 1, opposite page, top*) pertaining to forces of QOL are presented, i.e. interdisciplinary tension, design ambiguity and staff turnover (poor QOL), and, greater tool use, resource awareness, and the ability to improvise (rich QOL).

Distilling the data snapshot in Table 1 (*top, opposite page*), we can see how QOL at one studio (dubbed 'CGS') was subject to micro day-to-day forces. These largely stemmed from pressure on the team resulting from interdisciplinary tensions, staff turnover and lack of shared understanding of design

QUALITY OF LIFE CHALLENGE	IMPACT ON QUALITY OF LIFE (mood and community dimensions)	IMPROVISATIONS AND OUTCOMES
Legends project: US-based lead artist stopped emailing lead designer and artist, and then resigned. This put pressure on artist in terms of workload, and finding art direction.	Gayle, an artist, expressed frustration due to loss of contact with lead artist in US. A sense of loss of control, community and direction.	Artist coped by referring to visual materials such as mythical novels in attempt to re-orient herself and regain control. This led to improvised designs that were acceptable to the rest of the team.
Motor Valley project: Lead programmer resigned from CGS at start of the Motor Valley project having delivered a game. This had implications for staff strength, the ability to deliver the Motor Valley game, as well as work processes.	Upon hearing the news, Mac, an artist, was frustrated because and that he did not care about his place of work anymore. He withdrew from the team. John, a programmer, said taking over Richard's responsibilities was highly stressful.	Mac did not improvise; he did not cope with the loss of a close colleague, but retreated from the team to work alone, became inert. The designer wondered why Mac didn't just quit if he was so unhappy. John coped by drawing on resources such as an existing game engine Torque. This improved his productivity and his mood - he actually had fun in the end.
Revolutions project: A bitter war of words occurred between the artists and the programmers/designers over the technical constraints, which were not properly understood across the team. The subsequent need to reduce the size of the art assets led to further multiparty conflict and blame-games over the poor resultant art.	Gayle, the lead artist, expressed she was disheartened by this episode and there was less social interactions with the team too. Don, a programmer, was frustrated with Gayle's lack of flexibility to change the art: "We can't have something that looks good but then runs at one frame per minute." Alf, lead designer, was angry with Gayle saying he could have done a better job himself.	The artist did not cope well with the conflict, retreated from the team and was unwilling to contribute further. Programmer programmed some 'special effects' into the game to compensate for the so-called poor art work.

Table 1. Diagram shows QOL challenges, impacts and improvisations at CGS Studio

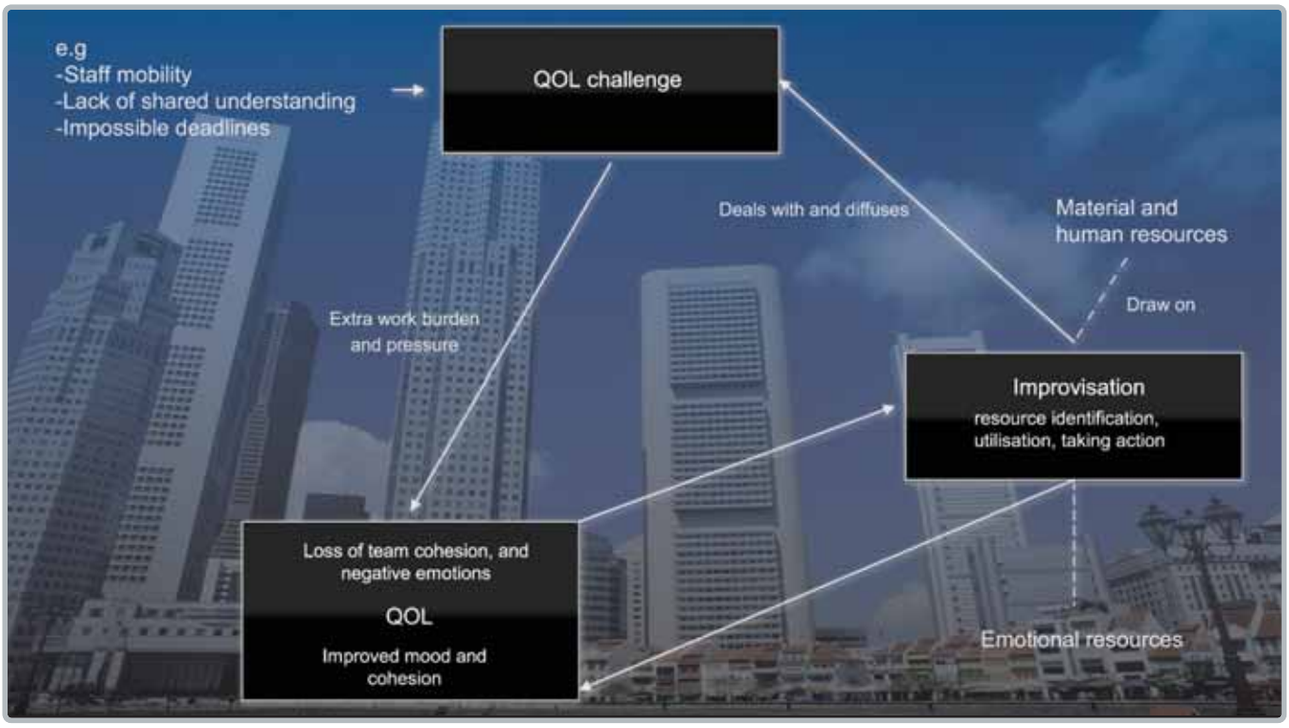


Table 2. Diagram shows the micro forces of quality of life and potential coping strategies

constraints. Such challenges had a negative impact on most of the developers' QOL since they experienced less team cohesion, and a variety of negative emotions such as irritation, frustration, desperation, loss of enjoyment, stress and dismay, as well as loss of sense of community. Many of the developers coped well by improvising around these challenges. Improvisation, then, is a tool or capability to be fostered in a team in order to deal with those detrimental forces of QOL.

While tweaking factors such as pay and hours is important to QOL, the study raises the issue that we also need to attend to the more micro day-to-day social, technical and political forces that act on our development efforts.

In summary, these are:

- Foster inter-disciplinary harmony
- Do your best to retain talent
- Reduce design ambiguity as early as possible
- Make all design constraints known to everyone in the team as they arise
- Encourage greater tool use
- Develop improvisational skills amongst your staff
- Try to stay positive!

CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to expose some of the dynamics and forces of QOL through a long term, in-depth field study. The diagram above gives a visual on the interaction between some of these forces. The article has also attempted to illuminate a pathway towards better QOL by considering some of the micro issues in game studios in Singapore.

Dr. Patrick Stacey is is a Research Associate of Design London at Imperial College Business School, a visiting scholar of Warwick Business School and a member of the AIM Scholars Pool
www.imperial.ac.uk

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BUILD

THE LATEST TOOLS NEWS, TECH UPDATES & TUTORIALS

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iDrone

IF YOU'VE NOTICED A theme pervading through this section of the magazine throughout the past six months – specifically, an increasing focus on iPhone middleware – perhaps it's worth mentioning that it's not a deliberate focus on our part.

When we first featured CRI's move into iPhone middleware in July we expected a few companies to follow suit, but the unpredictable lightning-strike probability of whether or not iPhone games will make significant revenues – and the shoestring budgets they need to be made on in order to cut losses on those that fail to get 'Featured App' status – made me suspect that the iPhone technology market wouldn't grow to rival its console sibling.

So the avalanche of hats thrown into the ring in the subsequent months has, I'll admit, caught me somewhat by surprise.

Game engines were a natural avenue of growth: at last year's Unite conference, several developers now making their living on the App Store agreed that eight weeks was the longest you could afford to spend on a project, given that a title lives or dies on whether Apple picks it up for 'Featured App'. Even for bite-sized games, eight weeks means you're going to need a strong technology base that allows rapid iteration; a perfect opportunity for middleware developers.

But Epic? Now that's a surprise.

Or, as Mark Rein says on this very page, perhaps it's not. The next generation of mobile devices will have power similar to the high-end machines of a few years ago. Perhaps they're thinking ahead.

One thing's for sure: with the next generation of consoles further off than it's ever been before, battle lines are being re-drawn. This is going to be interesting.

Ed Fear
ed.fear@intentmedia.co.uk

Epic de

With demonstrations of Unreal Engine 3 on iPhone and Nvidia's new Tegra 2 chip, it looks like Epic's diversifying from ultra high-end content. **Ed Fear** caught up with Mark Rein to find out more…

When we spoke to you in the past about Wii support for Unreal Engine 3, you said that you had enough on your hands optimising for current generation consoles and preparing for future hardware, without looking at last-gen tech. Does the UE3 on Tegra 2 announcement mean that this lower-spec stuff is now part of your plan?
Well, Tegra 2 isn't 'lower spec stuff' – it is definitely about the future rather than the past. Tegra 2 features a high-speed dual-core architecture mated to a DX9-class GPU with a decent amount of memory and a good bus speed. It is amazingly powerful for a mobile platform and performs well within the power range that you'd want for Unreal Engine 3, so it could be a good fit for our engine. We've also demonstrated the engine on iPhone 3GS and third-generation iPod Touch which are also good performance fits for UE3, and there's clearly a big business there.

From what we've seen so far, it looks like the Tegra 2 will find its home in tablet PCs and mobile devices – is this a sign that you're starting to tread into the mobile market a little more?
We look at these kinds of devices as bridges to the future. If Tegra 2 can do what it does today just think how much power we'd get with Tegra 3 and Tegra 4. Same goes for future generations of iPhone and iPod Touch. If current trends continue then in a few short years we'll see mobile devices that are easily as powerful as Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 on a per-pixel basis and soon even beyond that. These devices are going to be able to deliver the kind of compelling experiences for which Unreal Engine 3's superior tools and efficient pipeline provide a massive benefit. What we're doing now is getting ready for this future. There are still a lot of business issues to figure out, but we've at least demonstrated our engine can play in this arena.

> ***"If current trends continue, then in a few short years we'll see mobile devices that are easily as powerful as Xbox 360 and PS3 on a per-pixel basis, and soon even beyond."***

Epic has recently joined the Khronos Group – why did you decide to do this, and what are you hoping to achieve together?
The Khronos Group is a standards body that governs several key APIs including Open GL ES, the graphics API used in the majority of mobile devices. We joined the board of Khronos to have a seat at the table in determining how the major APIs for mobile graphics will evolve. It's important for this group to have input from game developers to ensure that the future devices are the best gaming platforms they can be. We believe our participation there will benefit the entire game industry and ultimately the consumers who play games on mobile devices.

velopments

It was only a few months ago that Epic released the free UDK – how do you feel the launch went for you?
It has gone very well. So far we've had over 125,000 unique user installs of the Unreal Development Kit which is pretty amazing considering it is, after all, a development kit.

Are you seeing much upsell from people wanting to go commercial with their products, or is it still early days?
Yeah, it definitely is still early days, but the initial and ongoing interest in using UDK for commercial products is beyond what I would have expected. So I'm very pleased with the way things are going.

As mentioned above, you've clearly been after the smaller developers for some time now. Has this done much to curry favour with them? Is it much more than an extended evaluation period?
I think there are a lot of developers for whom UDK is a great fit and a breath of fresh air. Many of them never had the possibility of gaining commercial-use access to Unreal Engine 3 prior to the release of UDK, so I think we'll see some really awesome and unique products released using it.

For some, UDK could be a stepping stone to gaining a full Unreal Engine 3 licence by being able to demonstrate their ability to create something really cool. They can use that to attract a partner who can make that a reality, or show us something special that opens the door for them directly. Either way, it's a win for gamers and developers alike.

Could you see yourselves expanding the 'Make Something Unreal' competition to include stand-alone content created with the UDK?
I don't know. The nice thing about UDK is that developers can 'make something Unreal' and be in control of their own commercial destiny. They don't need a contest to be able to make money from their talent; they can simply get the commercial license for UDK and go out and sell what they've made.

> ***"I think what we're showing right now is that Unreal Engine 3 never stands still; we're constantly working on it to make it better and extend its appeal."***

Some people originally thought that the UDK was slightly limited at launch – how has the DLLBind functionality in the recent update helped with that?
UDK's new DLLBind feature enables developers to easily interface UnrealScript code with external libraries written in C/C++, such as middleware components and hardware drivers. When we released UDK in November, this was one of the top user-requested features, and Jack Porter at Epic implemented it rapidly, using the open-source libffi package.

What other new features have you added since the launch of the UDK?
We're constantly improving Unreal Engine 3 and its tools so UDK, being a full-fledged binary version of UE3, has received a ton of new features and improvements – far too many to pick out just a few.

Just as significantly, we've also opened up loads of documentation and worked with partners to create some awesome training materials, including over 170 video training modules from the folks at 3D Buzz and two sample games that illustrate how to use UDK in different ways. With those games we're releasing the source code and developer diaries to show how they were made. These are incredible resources for UDK and UE3 users alike. Prior to UDK, only Unreal Engine 3 licensees knew the sheer breadth of the improvements we make to the engine on a month-to-month basis, but hopefully now more people can appreciate it.

With regards to the more traditional UE3 platforms, what sort of things can developers expect for Unreal Engine 3 in 2010?
I think what we're showing right now is that Unreal Engine 3 never stands still; we're constantly working to make it better and extend its appeal. Developers looking for game engines should come visit our Expo Suite at GDC to get a small glimpse of that.
www.epicgames.com

Far left: *Unreal Engine 3 running on an iPhone*
Left: *Epic's Tim Sweeney takes to the stage with Nvidia CEO Jen Hsun-Huang*
Above: *The UE3 iPhone demo*

GUIDE: IPHONE SOCIAL PLATFORMS

Want to connect your iPhone game to the world? There's a lot of choice out there, says **Ed Fear**…

Typical: like buses, you wait for one iPhone social platform SDK to come along, and then two do. Or, by our caculations, eight – but we'll bet there's even more hidden from our steely gaze.

If there's one thing that Microsoft's managed to get right this generation it's the online service: Sony was in catch-up mode for at least two years just to reach the same feature-set of its competitor. It proved that people want to know exactly what their friends are playing; that they wanted to be able to organise sessions easily; and they wanted to be able to communicate with each other even if they were in different games. It also proved that with just a few simple challenges (or, in this case, Achievements), developers could increase the stickiness and even desirability of their games, while giving players the ability to show off and brag about their mad skills.

So it's no surprise that iPhone gamers want a similar thing, but the lack of a unified network is a distinct problem, and can make it hard for developers to pick from the many options available. We've rounded up four of the most popular to give you a guide to their differences.

SCORELOOP

DEVELOPER
Scoreloop

GAMES
Astro Boy, Pee Monkey, Parachute Panic

PLATFORMS
iPhone, Android

PRICE
Free

CONTACT
Via website

Astro Boy: Flying Action is one of Scoreloop's higher profile integrations

www.scoreloop.com

Scoreloop's Core Social is one of the less immediately popular social platforms, but given the recent expansion of the service onto Android devices – with the same feature list as its iPhone brother, and the promise of cross-platform challenging – that could be set to change. What's also interesting is that the platform is touted as a white label service, so that you can integrate the features into your own interface rather than bringing up a separate (and often branded) screen.

CRYSTAL SDK

DEVELOPER
Chillingo

CLIENTS
Guerilla Bob, Mission: Deep Sea

PLATFORMS
iPhone

PRICE
Free

CONTACT
Via website

Achievements are just one of the features Crystal promises

www.crystalsdk.com

Chillingo's entry into the iPhone social platform space looks like it'll be one befitting one of the market's biggest publishers – although 'looks like' is pretty much all we have to go on at this point. All the features you'd expect are present – challenges, leaderboards and achievements, plus a simple Unity integration path – but, given that the service launches in its first games just this month, it appears as if they're only accepting selected partners for now. Still, with Chillingo at the wheel it's bound to be popular.

OPENFEINT

DEVELOPER
Aurora Feint

CLIENTS
Fieldrunners, Space Invaders: Infinity Gene

PLATFORMS
iPhone

PRICE
Free

CONTACT
Via website

Fieldrunners was one of the first games to incorporate OpenFeint

www.openfeint.com

Possibly the best-known iPhone social platform – and certainly the most popular one that's not tied into a publisher – OpenFeint has won support for good reasons: easy integration (it takes 19 minutes, according to the documentation), support for saving to the cloud, in-game chat rooms and forums, plus cross-promotional opportunities and help with upselling free users into paying ones. Real-time multiplayer support is also promised, although is currently in private beta stage.

PLUS+

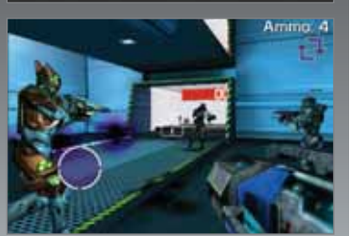
DEVELOPER
Ngmoco

CLIENTS
Worms, Charadium, iCopter, Eliminate Pro

PLATFORMS
iPhone

PRICE
On request

CONTACT
Via website



Eliminate Pro is one of the flagship titles for ngmoco's Plus+

www.plusplus.com

Riding on the back of Ngmoco's success in the App Store, Plus+ has already managed to receive a large number of integrations despite currently being 'rolled out slowly' - although the company says it has 'enormous plans' that include releasing an open SDK in the future. Those that managed to get picked for partnership can enjoy all of the usual jazz, including push notifications and access to Ngmoco's 'powerful metrics database and promotions engine'. Feel the power.

KEYRELEASE

Bedrock

Mobile games might be getting a lot more portable, **Ed Fear** discovers…

PRODUCT: Bedrock
DEVELOPER: Metismo
PRICE: Available on request
CONTACT: www.metismo.com

Far left: Bedrock supports a wide range of platforms

Left: Many expect Google's Nexus One to rival Apple's iPhone

Right: John Chasey, MD of Metismo

Rightly or wrongly, the biggest buzz of 2009 was iPhone development: the open(ish) platform with low(ish) barriers to entry and an audience hungry to spend small change on games.

If you listen to many industry commentators, they'll say that the iPhone has finally brought to light the potential for the mobile games market, niche as it was before. And, while they're correct, there's an inherent fallacy (and oxymoronic quality) to constricting the mobile market to one device, especially one so highly priced. Rather, it's a fear of the messy, sprawling nature of mobile development beyond one fixed – and well-supported - platform.

UK tech firm Metismo – run by John Chasey, president of mobile developer Finblade – has founded itself on a single concept: breaking down the barriers between different mobile platforms. Metismo's Bedrock technology allows developers to write code once, in Java, and then have it cross-compile for a wide range of platforms, including iPhone, Android, Symbian, Windows Mobile, BREW, Blackberry, and even DS and PSP.

"The iPhone is very much the lead platform for mobile games, and its users are spending lots of cash on content," says Chasey. "That doesn't mean, however, that all of a sudden anyone without an iPhone has stopped buying games – if anything, there's less competition on other handsets, so companies still servicing those markets are making more now than they were six to 12 months ago.

"Operators do not want to be totally beholden to Apple, and therefore will support a range of devices from different manufacturers. In fact, given Apple's success to date and that their commercial arrangement with the iPhone is heavily biased towards them, operators will aggressively market other handsets because they can make more money from those users. The end result is that there will continue to be a healthy population of users – in fact a majority – with non-Apple devices that want good quality content."

COMPILE-DRIVER

It sounds far, far too good to be true, but there's proven technology backing up the claims. Bedrock is split into two main parts: the first is a set of runtime libraries, written in Java, that cover many of the bases regarding game and app development, including image drawing, text and fonts, sound playback, menu layout, fixed point maths and trigonometry, record store access, HTTP connectivity and SMS functionality.

Next up is the cross-compiler, which takes source written in Java and compiles it to human-readable C++ native to your chosen platform.

"We translate the Java code into C++ source which is then compiled directly with each platform's normal SDK and compiler, so performance is akin to as if you had written it yourself in C++," explains Chasey.

"For each platform we have a highly tuned abstraction of all the core areas – for example the renderer – so this, combined with good development practice, means the end result is code that is as at least as fast as the original Java and the handwritten C++ equivalent, if not faster."

One thing we quizzed John Chasey about is how the one-source-fits-all approach can go beyond the lowest common denominator and take advantage of the unique capabilities of each platform, such as the iPhone's accelerometer or the hardware keyboard on a Blackberry.

"There is a very broad range of JSRs [Java Specification Requests] within the Java standard to cater for the varied handsets on the market. We tap into appropriate JSRs to support hardware on specific devices in a standard way. For example, on the iPhone we use standard MIDP functionality to enable touch screen input, JSR-239 to interact with OpenGL ES, JSR-256 to enable feedback from the accelerometer, and JSR-135 to enable audio playback.

"All of these JSRs are common and familiar to mobile Java programmers already, so providing a bridge with them smooths their transition into iPhone development. Where there is no appropriate JSR, however, we provide a facility for the developer to insert native code into the project. An example for this is to use the virtual keyboard on the iPhone for input. This can be easily encapsulated with a couple of lines of code and the result passed back."

> ***"There will continue to be a majority of users with non-Apple devices, and they also want high-quality content."***

To those already working in the iPhone field, the thought of going to Java from Objective-C might feel like quite a hurdle. In the end, says Chasey, most people who are already targeting mobile are working in Java, be it J2ME on standard handsets or the official SDKs for Blackberry and Android.

"Many mobile developers have core teams proficient in Java development, and being able to leverage this developer experience can be an important requirement when considering adopting a new system. Plus, writing in languages other than Java can result in developers focusing on issues that are too platform-specific, and making assumptions on this can cause problems when the code comes to be ported."

Battle-tested at Finblade, where it underpins the firm's multi-handset approach, Bedrock could help developers hedge their bets and target markets currently starved of games, and see the mobile market bloom as it has so long promised to.

MINIS ME

While the mobile sector and its sea of disparate phone models is the key focus of Bedrock, the fact that the technology supports DS and PSP is intriguing – if only that we can't imagine many scenarios where mobile games, traditionally bite-size and designed around a hamstrung control system, would be worth porting to either of the platforms.

Chasey acknowledges the issue, but says that both platforms' new focus on small-scale gaming – through DSi Ware on the DSi and Minis on the PSP – has created a market for porting phone product to portable platforms.

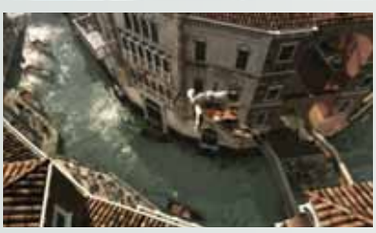
"While the DS and PSP were cartridge-based with a physical distribution approach there was minimal interest, but it's really exploded with the advent of digital distribution," he enthuses.

"If a company is exploring a digital distribution strategy for a piece of IP then the PSP and DS are now viable alternative channels, and our technology can fit very well within that strategy when they are looking to cover a broad range of devices."

HEARD ABOUT

Assassin's Creed II

How do you go about scoring a sci-fi conspiracy thriller set in 15th Century Venice? **John Broomhall** talks to composer Jesper Kyd…



Assassin's Creed II places the player at the heart of an epic story of family, vengeance and conspiracy. Set in the Renaissance era, the life Italian nobleman Ezio Auditore da Firenze gradually unfolds accompanied by a rich soundscape.

Underpinning the aural offering is the original score by Jesper Kyd (*pictured above, far right*) which, running at some three-and-a-half hours, was clearly a massive undertaking. Luckily, Kyd tells us, he was brought into the project in its very early stages.

"It's vital to start discussions early on the project. Being involved at that stage makes for a more accurate soundtrack – you can capture a lot of things you might not have thought about if you'd had to do it all in three weeks at the end," he explains.

"You can really get into the mood and what the team is trying to express. A unique game requires a unique soundtrack – you have to step all the way back and consider what are the ground elements you want. You start from scratch and build around the core idea which, in this case, is the 15th Century setting. The music has to be interesting; it has to fit the era but also be entertaining."

Kyd clearly does his research, but most of all is concerned with creating the right vibe. Not historically hog-tied, however, he mixes in many modern elements as well: "The music has a dark foreboding feel when you undertake missions, but there's also plenty of score for exploring the cities featuring lots of strings and woodwind, individual vocal performances, acoustic and electric guitars, live percussion and choir. There are live elements to every piece of music in the game."

With two hours' worth of orchestra and choir performances recorded at Hollywood's Capitol Studios, the entire production took Kyd nine months. Much work was done at his own facility where among the other usual studio toys, he owns 22 hardware synthesisers, including a 1970s collection encompassing a Yamaha CS-80 and a Roland System 100.

"I use analogue to get an organic sound – it's vastly superior to anything that goes on inside a computer," he explains. "I use it to make a non-electronic sound, you could say. None of these synths are MIDI-equipped so I play it all in live, recording directly to audio. Using plug-ins can quickly become precise and electronic sounding, and I needed something that would blend nicely with live orchestra."

Music integration and balancing with sound effects and dialogue falls to the Ubisoft audio team, although Kyd takes a thoughtful approach at his end. "With the escape music, for example, I'm aware that there'll be people screaming and running around, so you need to write something that kind of slips through those sounds – whereas when you're just walking around Venice not engaged, the music will come through very clearly with more detail. You can create something with a lot of depth for that."

Interestingly, Kyd is somewhat wary of so-called interactive music systems potentially making for clinical music output. "It really depends on the genre but in some games the music just needs to spell out the story – you've reached the falling off the bridge point so now play the 'falling off the bridge' music," he says.

> ***"When music in games is too 'systematic' it's because of a technology-driven decision, made by programmers, and it can sacrifice music quality."***
>
> Jesper Kyd

"But for titles like *Assassin's Creed II* there's the whole sandbox idea of people living in that environment where we want them to have fun. That's what I'm trying to support with the music, and so it can't always be mission or gameplay-structured. It has to be more about setting the mood to help you feel you're really hanging out inside the assassin's world.

"I think a lot of times when music in games is too 'systematic' it's because of a technology-driven decision, maybe by programmers, and you can end up sacrificing music quality or music entertainment with too much layering.

"So I have to hand it to Ubisoft – whilst they are really a hardcore tech-savvy team, and visually the game looks amazing, at the same time they're willing to step back and say we don't actually have to take that kind of complicated approach to music delivery.

"Instead, because we have fairly long pieces of music with custom endings that can be triggered at a musically appropriate point, there's time to set the mood. By doing so, I think you're facilitating immersion – if people love the atmosphere and want to go back there even after they've completed the missions and again experience the mood and feelings they had when listening to the music, then the score is successful."

With his initial music experiments warmly received by the team at Ubisoft Montreal, an atmosphere of trust was soon established leading to even greater creative freedom which Kyd has clearly relished, judging by the final results. As well as featuring in Video Games Live symphony concerts, the music soundtrack has also charted very favourably on iTunes and Amazon, demonstrating once again that high quality videogame music has a life beyond the borders of its original application.

John Broomhall is an independent audio director, consultant and content provider.

john@johnbroomhall.co.uk
www.johnbroomhall.co.uk

DUNGEON DEFENSE BUILT ON UDK

Several games created with the Unreal Development Kit (UDK) have been released since the free Unreal Engine 3 toolset's November launch, and loads of new projects are in the works.

This month, we would like to introduce you to Trendy Entertainment's *Dungeon Defense*, which combines tower defense strategy with action RPG gameplay in a stylised fantasy setting.

In *Dungeon Defense*, players fend off unrelenting hordes of invading baddies by summoning defenses and traps throughout their lair as members of one of four distinct hero classes.

In addition to levying strategic commands, players engage in a healthy dose of direct combat while upgrading statistics, looting equipment and gaining special abilities. Seamless online and local multiplayer enable players to cooperate and compete to build the strongest heroes and achieve the highest scores.

The goal of the first release of *Dungeon Defense* is to provide the growing UDK community with open-source, open-content examples of ways to implement various types of gameplay within Unreal Engine 3.

"From a development standpoint, working with UDK has been like driving a Ferrari," said Jeremy Stieglitz, studio head of Trendy Entertainment.

"UDK enabled us to focus on gameplay design rather than technical underpinnings so that Trendy's indie team was able to take our idea from paper concept to a fully realised demo in just four weeks. Plus, it's a huge comfort knowing that by using UDK our content is ready for all sorts of Unreal platforms."

Check out *Dungeon Defense* in the Project Show-off section of the UDK forums (www.udk.com/forums) to read blogs about the game's creation, view development videos and download code samples.

Above: Trendy Entertainment's Dungeon Defense

EPIC GAMES JOINS KHRONOS GROUP AND DEMOS UNREAL ENGINE 3 FOR MOBILE DEVICES

Epic Games has joined Khronos Group, an industry consortium creating open graphical standards, as a member of its Board of Promoters. Khronos membership will enable Epic to provide significant input into the development and evolution of key graphics 3D standards, such as OpenGL and OpenGL ES, that enable our game engine technology on an increasingly broad range of platforms.

We recently concluded technology demonstrations of Unreal Engine 3 on iPhone 3GS, iPod Touch (third-generation) and NVIDIA's powerful new Tegra 2 platform. We are very excited about the emergence of mobile platforms that are great candidates for Unreal Engine 3-powered games and applications.

"Epic is one of the most respected games technology companies on the planet and Khronos is delighted to have their participation as we create the APIs that enable key gaming engines, such as Unreal Engine 3, to tap into the power of 3D GPU acceleration on a wide range of platforms," said Neil Trevett, Khronos president and vice president of mobile content at NVIDIA.

"Epic's real-world experience and standing in the industry will enable them to bring enormous insight and influence to the evolution of the OpenGL and OpenGL ES specifications that will benefit the entire industry."

We joined the board of Khronos to have a seat at the table in determining how the major APIs for visually compelling mobile graphics will evolve over the next few years. Our goal is to ensure that the functionality essential to bringing rich experiences to mobile users is enabled on both the hardware and software side of modern devices and platforms.

To discuss anything raised in this column or general licensing opportunities for Epic Games' *Unreal* engine, contact: **mrein@epicgames.com**

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Mark Rein is vice president of Epic Games based in Raleigh, North Carolina. Since 1992 Mark has worked on Epic's licensing and publishing deals, business development, public relations, academic relations, marketing and business operations.
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UNITYFOCUS

Finding Success on the iPhone

What's the key to being successful on the App Store? Unity's **Thomas Grové** speaks to Graveck's Jonathan Czeck, developer of the runaway hit *Skee-Ball*…

When did you start using Unity for iPhone development?
We got invited to a small beta test group before it was released. After a lot of brainstorming, we picked the *Skee-Ball* concept because it was a simple game we knew would take advantage of Unity's awesome physics engine, and it was something we could crank out on the side. Also, at that time, it would have been the first out there – but by the time it was released there were a few competitors.

Was Unity Remote useful in the development of *Skee-Ball*?
Oh, wow. I think if we didn't have Unity Remote I'd still be making test builds. *Skee-Ball* was a simple game to make, but we tweaked it a lot. If we had to wait for the building, installing, and running each time we made a small change, you can bet we wouldn't have bothered to make those small changes. The lower you can get your iteration time, the better.

How much iteration did you do with the ball rolling mechanic?
I believe that's about all that one person did for a week. It was a lot of number tweaking, and then trying to add more sensible things to tweak when tweaking the existing numbers alone didn't get things where we wanted to go. I still don't think we got it quite right but it works pretty well. If you go to an arcade and play a game of *Skee-Ball*, you will no doubt notice everything moves a lot faster. The realists in us got pushed aside for this, because fast physics didn't feel quite as engaging.

How long were you in development for *10 Balls 7 Cups* and *Skee-Ball*?
Ahh, you touched on *Skee-Ball's* precursor, *10 Balls 7 Cups*. I think it was probably about two person-months of work. *Skee-Ball* was probably another month or two thrown on there. We almost released *Skee-Ball* as a rebranding of *10 Balls 7 Cups*; I'm glad we decided instead to add some major features like a graphical store and Plus+, and make it a sequel instead of just a rebranding.

How long have you been in the #1 App spot?
We've been at the number one spot for a total of about five weeks. The first time was after our initial launch. We kept climbing all the way up steadily. That lasted a couple of weeks. The second time was a bit of a surprise. We had this massive spike after Christmas that brought us back to number one after hovering around eleventh place. That lasted for a few weeks. At the moment I think we've fallen to the fourth position, but I'm rather proud we've been able to hold on top for so long considering the competition out there.

How many copies have you sold to date?
We broke a million copies recently. It's pretty fantastic. I think there are only a handful of apps that have ever done this.

Is there a consistent formula for success on the iPhone?
Nobody knows anything. We all just guess. I think it's basically to be realistic. If something stinks, be real about it and don't point fingers. Chances are you're not going to have any influence on how the App Store operates, so accept it and work with it. Brands seem to be a big deal, because you're usually selling to people's glances. Don't set yourself up for failure with too big of a risk where your game has to be extremely popular for you to break even. Build upon smaller successes.

Do you have any method that describes the way you approach game development?
I'm not sure we do. We're not as much interested in thinking about how we should make games as we are in just making them. We keep things small with great people who can really communicate well, and just go for it in an open constructive environment. This approach doesn't scale up very well, but we're just fine with that. We're doing what we love and are being successful at it. I suppose that is a method after all.

What can we expect next from the team at Graveck?
We're working on a great title with Freeverse that'll have a similar fun feel and atmosphere to *Skee-Ball*. We're also carving out some time from our busy contract work schedule to make another game using what we've learned from our previous ones. I want to make a game that loads very quickly and you can play for only a minute, but you are rewarded for your progress long term. I love collecting and a bit of randomness added to that collecting. It makes it feel like a treasure hunt. I guess the design element of 'collect stuff' can be applied to any genre, so we'll have to figure that one out. There are some ideas, like sending out intelligent cars to go out on scavenger hunts for you. We'll see what happens.

Unity Remote lets you live preview your game on an actual iPhone

SPOTLIGHT: UNITY REMOTE

Building iPhone games that really feel good can be tricky; novel interfaces such as multi-touch and accelerometers are still coming into their own and often used poorly. In order to avoid the scorn of reviewers, developers must iterate on their controls time and time again. Fortunately this a breeze when using Unity Remote.

Unity Remote is an awesome feature in Unity iPhone that gives you the ability to live preview your game on an actual iPhone – without having to rebuild and redeploy your Xcode project. It does this by establishing a connection between your iPhone and the Unity editor. Video from your game is streamed to the iPhone screen, while the input you provide on the iPhone is sent back to Unity. In true Unity fashion, you can even change scripts and art assets on the fly to tweak the game's look and feel.

To download a free evaluation of Unity iPhone, visit **http://unity3d.com** More than 550 games made with Unity iPhone have been published to the App Store.

Autodesk Games Insight

The latest scoop from Autodesk Media & Entertainment

HEIGHTENING REALISM WITH AI

With the technological power of today's consoles and PCs, gamers are demanding more realism than ever. In the challenge to create truly immersive gameplay, artificial intelligence is paramount to giving users an immersive experience.

In this article we look at a common, but challenging, game scenario and how the Autodesk Kynapse artificial intelligence middleware can help solve this challenge through 3D spatial awareness, 3D path-finding and team coordination.

COMBAT EVOLVED

In a combat game scenario, we have a player-controlled character, and three computer-controlled bodyguards that follow the player and protect it. Wherever the player goes in the level, the bodyguards will automatically identify key areas where an enemy could shoot at the player. The bodyguards will use this information and move into the appropriate position to protect the player.

This scenario would be used in games where a player character has computer-controlled team members that need to move through a level with the player and assist. The AI that drives this kind of behavior can be achieved through the use of Kynapse. Spatial awareness libraries help each entity identify in real-time the key topological zones where an enemy could hide and shoot from, which includes windows, street corners and access ways. These key zones can be automatically generated through the Kynapse toolset, or manually tagged by level designers. What is interesting about this scenario is the realism of the solution – when the player is positioned against a wall, none of the bodyguards will face the wall because no threat can come from the wall.

THE PATH

To move the characters into their appropriate positions, we use the Kynapse 3D path-finding library. This enables each character to find their way to their target positions in the level, while dynamically avoiding objects and other characters. In this scenario, characters only have to move a short distance, but the Kynapse library can also cater for very large maps such as those used in role-playing games. In such cases, Kynapse can utilise hierarchical path-finding technology, which provides an elegant and highly optimised solution for helping characters find their way across larger worlds.

Finally, the bodyguards scenario uses team coordination to ensure that each character doesn't go to the same spot. Through the use of the Kynapse libraries, each character can share information, just like a real team would. The result is that each character intelligently moves into a position that could protect the player in the most sensible way, which heightens reality and gives players an immersive experience of being protected by comrades on the battlefield.

This is just one scenario that shows how Kynapse can be used to solve a complex AI challenge in games. In such a case, developing your own AI solution might be prohibitively expensive due to the cost of research, development, testing and implementation. With Kynapse, the solution is off-the-shelf and ready to integrate into your game.

To see Kynapse in action (including the above scenario and others), we invite you to watch the Introduction to Kynapse video at *www.autodesk.com/kynapse*.

For more information about Kynapse and Autodesk Middleware, please contact us at ***middleware@autodesk.com****.*

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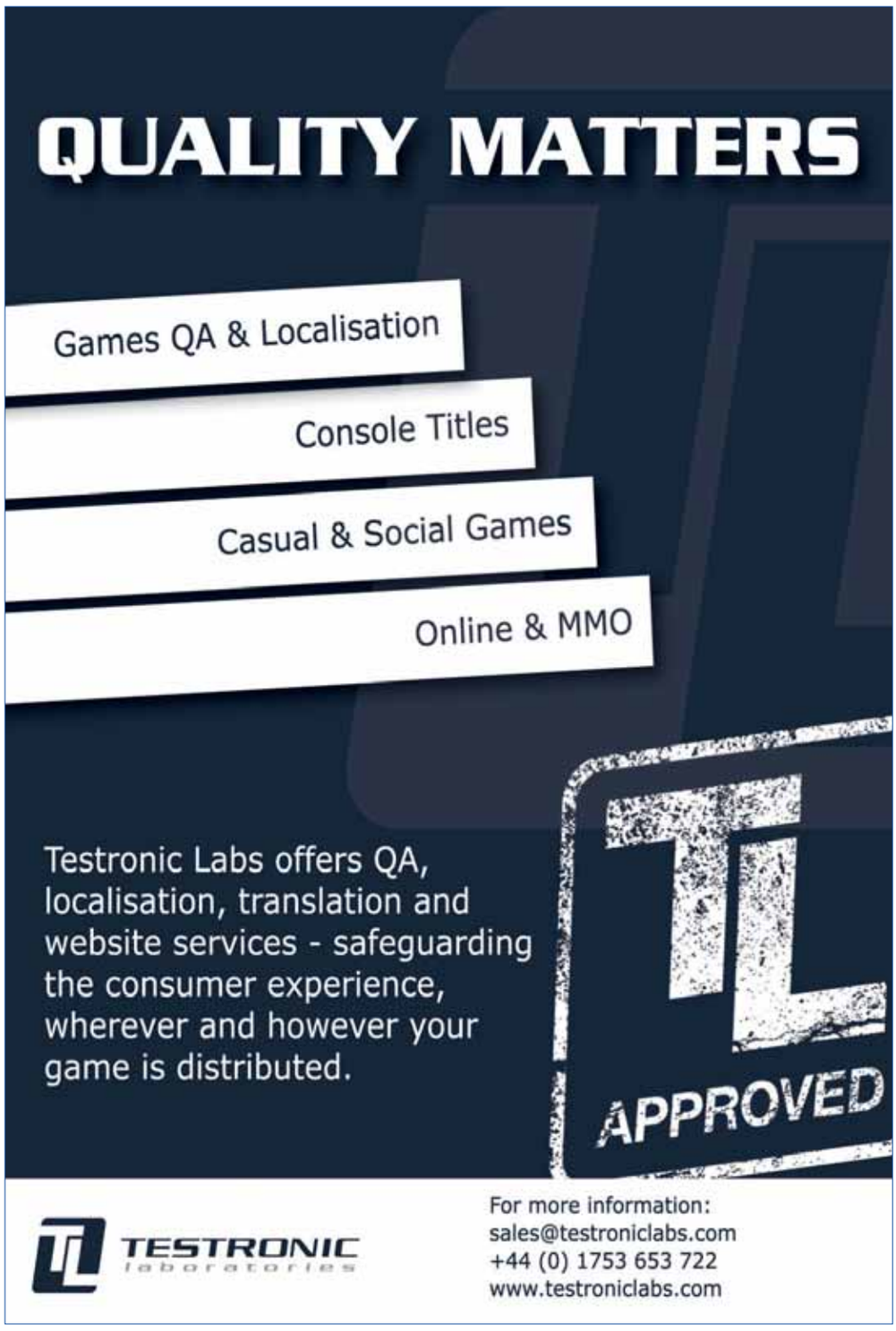

Studio News

This month: Unity, Lightning Fish and High Voltage...

Unity Technologies continues to grow its business – the game engine firm has announced two key hires.

The firm has appointed former GarageGames man Brett Seyler (*left*) as its VP of strategy, and IO Interactive's Steffen Toksvig (*right*) as its development director.

"I'm incredibly happy to have Brett and Steffen on board," said David Helgason, CEO of Unity Technologies.

"This 'pair of aces' is going to really strengthen our hand as we grow Unity Technologies into the number one platform for interactive content developers."

Seyler spent 2008 and 2009 as GM of Torque at InstantAction (nee GarageGames) where he oversaw numerous aspects of the firm including operations, finance, product development, marketing and business development. Under his tenure, the business grew by more than 50 per cent year-on-year, and the product itself advanced dramatically over previous versions.

"Unity Technologies has shown impressive foresight by investing early in technology for both browser and mobile games, which are now the most exciting segments in the industry," said Seyler.

Toksvig will be based at Unity's HQ in Denmark. Prior to joining he spent six years at IO Interactive as CTO, tools developer and lead programmer, where he contributed to the success of the *Hitman* series, *Kane & Lynch* and *Freedom Fighters*.

www.unity3d.com

Lightning Fish Games has welcomed Nick Court (*left*) to its growing team as senior project manager, and Sam Stevens (*right*) as its lead video editor.

"Nick established his own development studio in the early 90's before holding roles at MicroProse and Broadsword Interactive," revealed Lightning Fish CEO Simon Prytherch. "While at Microprose he was producer on BAFTA winning *Geoff Crammond's Grand Prix 4*. Nick brings over 17 years experience in a diverse range of genres from puzzle games to racing games. Nick is a great asset at a time when we are broadening our target market.

"Sam came to us from the television industry, with over eight years experience working on shows for the main terrestrial broadcasters, including the BBC, ITV and Sky Sports," added the CEO. "Sam has a broad skill base across film production, but it was his skills as an editor that was initially appealing to us."

www.lightningfishgames.com

Chicago-based developer **High Voltage Software** has promoted Anthony Glueck as its new development director.

Glueck assumes the role of developer director and will now manage the studio's programming department and Advanced Technology Group. The news follows the studio's apparent shuffle towards multiplatform development after finishing Wii title The Conduit.

"I have worked side by side with Anthony for years," said High Voltage chief creative officer Eric Nofsinger.

"His experience, attention to detail, and management skills make him ideal to fill this position and help us advance our goals of creating the uppermost quality games."

www.high-voltage.com

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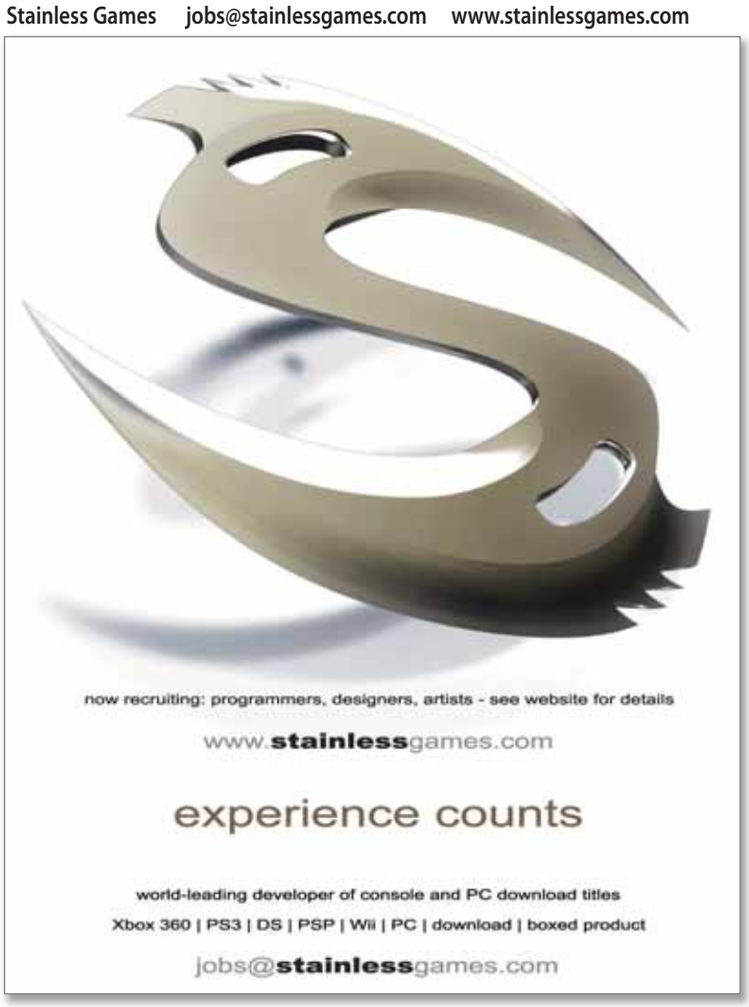
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Tools News

Mobile firm Metismo secures business development manager

Chantal Havard has joined privately owned mobile middleware specialist **Metismo** as the firm's business development manager. Chantal brings experience from her previous position at Lonely Planet, and counts InfoSpace, IOMO and Electronic Arts as her former employers.

"Having had the pleasure of working with Chantal previously at IOMO and InfoSpace, when Metismo needed to expand its sales force she was the ideal candidate to join the team," said John Chasey, CEO of Metismo.

"I'm looking forward to working with a great team and promoting the benefits of Bedrock to the community," added Chantal.

Metismo's Bedrock rapid production environment is designed to allow developers to prototype, develop, target and deliver applications to numerous mobile and handheld platforms, including Android, iPhone, DS, PSP and Flash. Using a cross compiler Bedrock converts J2ME source code to native C++, and includes a comprehensive device database.

www.metismo.com

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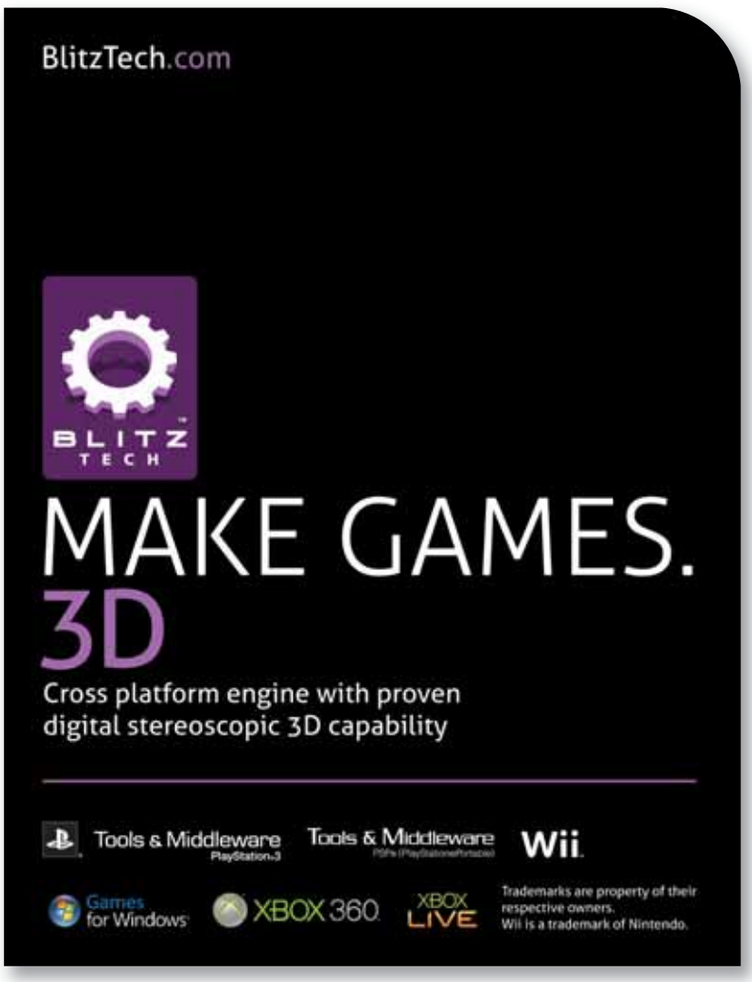

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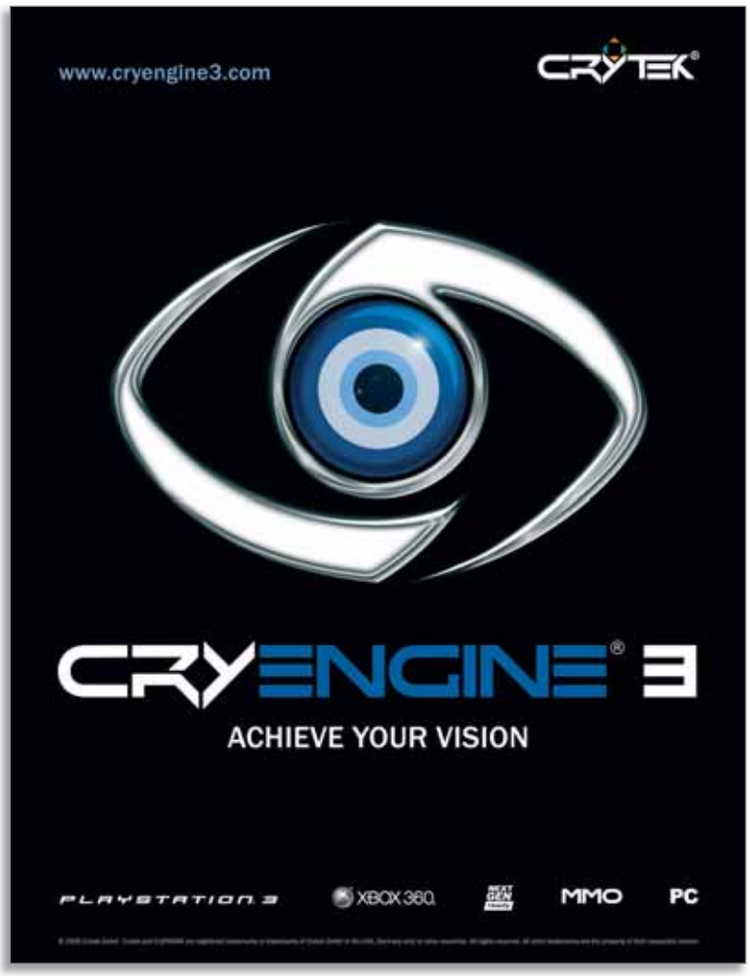

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Tool Spotlight

BLITZTECH

Technology type: Engine

The Oliver brothers and their colleagues have been refining the internal tech at their studio for over a decade. BlitzTech is, in effect, the fruit of that labour, and is now available as a game engine aimed in general at large-scale developments.

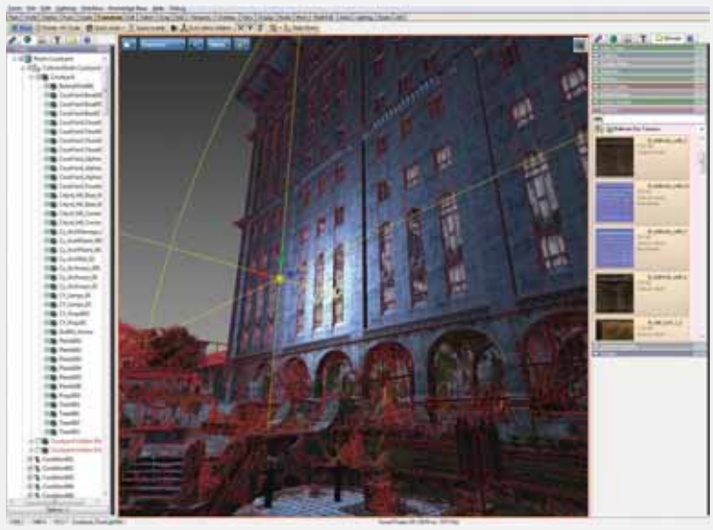
With that audience in mind, BlitzTech has emerged as a substantial package with technical muscle in abundance, designed to support remote working and built-in version control.

The engine is conceived to offer a highly flexible application that caters for the whole development pipeline, and includes an impressive game editor, which can be deployed on the target console for immediate feedback and to allow for real-time changes to the game world. The same editor also enables artists and designers to work across multiple and technologically incongruent SKUs with a single, consistant interface.

BlitzTech also enables WYSIWYG shader editing with total interactive control and preview of material shader effects, including multiple texture stages, environment mapping and refraction in real-time.

As well as boasting impressive graphical power – running entirely on dynamic lighting – BlitzTech is significantly compatible, providing support for the numerous high profile packages including Maya, Photoshop, Sound Forge and Vegas, as well as standard file formats.

Interestingly, BlitzTech also features support for true stereoscopic 3D on current-generation consoles, marking it out as a truly all-encompassing engine.



CONTACT:
BlitzTech
Regent Square House
The Parade
Leamington Spa
Warwickshire
CV32 4NL
United Kingdom

E: business@blitzgamesstudios.com
W: www.blitztech.com

Services News

Relentless turns to Sidelines for Blue Toad Murder Files

When Relentless asked Sidelines to find a writer for their first self-published game, *Blue Toad Murder Files*, Iain Lowson (*pictured*) was brought onto the title's development.

Lowson began working with the Relentless design team very early into the development of the six episode project. He began by producing a fully detailed plot document covering all episodes scene by scene with project lead Paul Woodbridge before writing the scripts.

He worked closely with the team, fine-tuning the stories and dialogue based on team and focus group feedback. The world of *Blue Toad* is peopled with a cast of colorful characters for which Iain assisted the art department by providing biographies and visual influences for certain characters and locations.

Sini Downing, Sidelines' agency director said: "We were really excited when Relentless approached us for a writer. This was their first foray outside of the *Buzz* franchise and we knew how important the story, feel of the world and the characters were going to be to the game. Iain got really involved, working very closely with design, art, and audio."

Darren Tuckey, Relentless' senior producer, added: "Working with Sidelines and Iain Lowson on *Blue Toad Murder Files* was a very positive experience for us. The professionalism and flexibility shown as well as commitment to the project meant that we were able to get a great script for the game, and felt as though Iain was a member of the internal team rather than an external writer."

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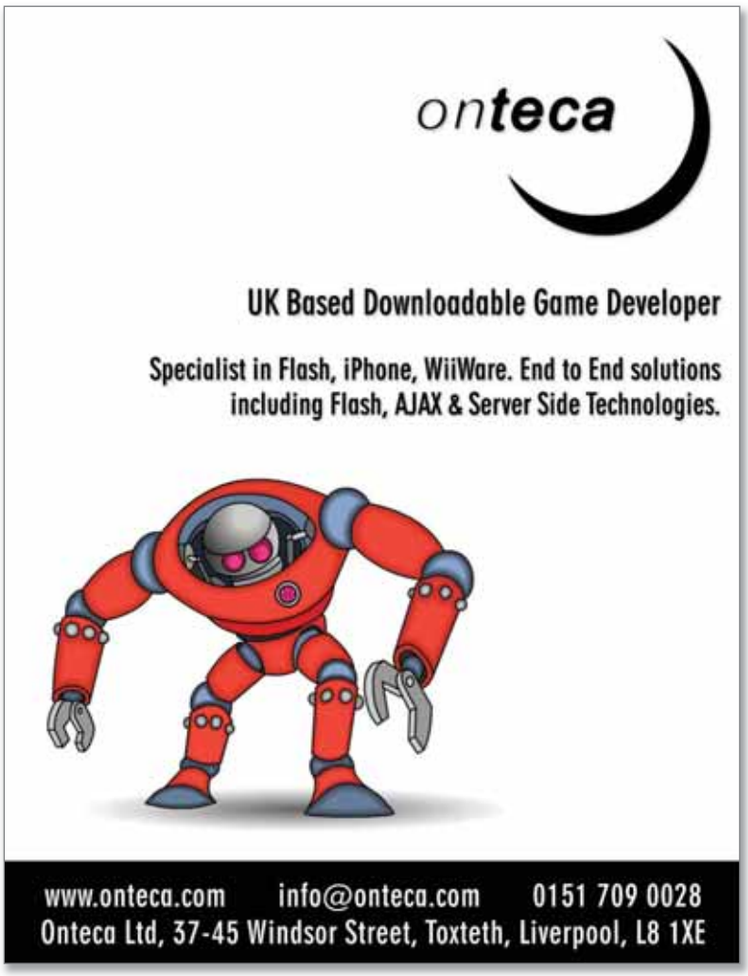
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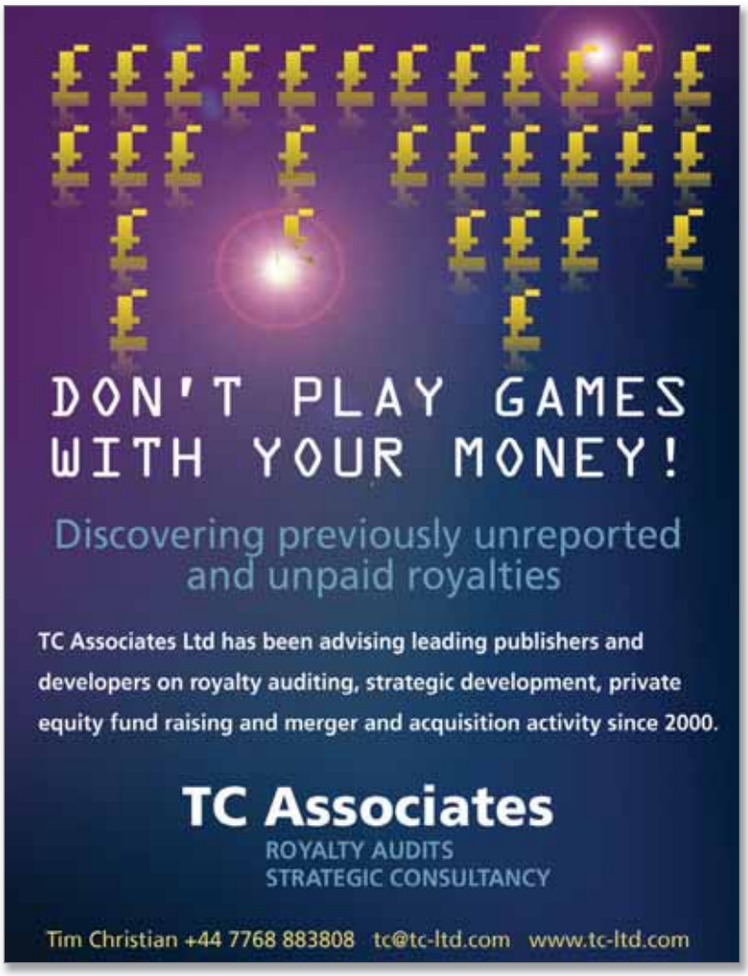
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Training News

University of Bedfordshire joins Tiga

The University of Bedfordshire has become the newest member of game industry association Tiga.

The establishment boasts a range of courses for aspiring game designers, including specific courses in game development, computer science and animation.

"It is vital that the games industry has an effective voice and I believe Tiga can do this," said Carsten Maple, head of the University of Bedfordshire's department for computer science and technology.

"Our students will be entering the industry soon and I hope that joining Tiga will give them an awareness of the issues Tiga is seeking to address."

Maple, who has also joined Tiga as an education advisor, has also expressed enthusiastic support for Tiga's efforts in lobbying the government with regard to industry concerns.

"More and more universities are recognising the importance of joining Tiga," added Tiga CEO Richard Wilson. "It is crucial that academia and industry collaborate to ensure our graduates are fully equipped to meet industry needs. We are delighted that the University of Bedfordshire has joined the Tiga community."

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Develop looks at the various areas of the performance capture field to find out what has changed and which new technologies are supporting developers' character creations

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Our territory guide looks closer to home, taking in how Oxford's dreaming spires (and its studios) are working their magic on games development

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EDITORIAL enquiries should go through to Michael.French@intentmedia.co.uk, or call him on 01992 535646

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